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COVER PHOTO: A middle school student shows a pre-school student how to plant bald cypress seeds during a recent school Earth Day celebration at Bishop Noland Episcopal Day School in Lake Charles, Louisiana. Photo credit: Libby Richards [used with permission from Louisiana State University, Coastal Roots]
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Literacy & Social Responsibility Mission Statement

The Literacy & Social Responsibility Special Interest Group (SIG) of the International Reading Association seeks to study, understand, and advocate for high-quality programs that integrate: community service, participatory citizenship, social responsibility, appreciation for diversity, environmental stewardship, character education, and/or caring behavior into the development of literacy across the curriculum.

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This Special Interest Group of the International Reading Association provides a forum for educators, authors, researchers, and the public to present their insights and to interact with others who share similar concerns at our annual meeting at the IRA convention as well as online on our website and through our eJournal.

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Message from the Editor Margaret-Mary Sulentic Dowell

Welcome readers, to the newly launched 2010 issue of the ejournal, *Literacy and Social Responsibility*, volume 3, number 1. As this issue came together, I kept asking myself, "How best can we educate our children, grandchildren, students, fellow and sister teachers, administrators, the public?" I had to look no further than educators contributing to this volume.

The lead article and cover story comes from Pamela Blanchard and me, colleagues at Louisiana State University. We share a love of literature, children, and protecting our fragile coastal ecosystem, battered by nature and human footprint. Pam puts her passion into action; I simply added literature to an amazing science program as a means of providing a demonstration of transdisciplinary teaching for preservice teachers entrusted to our care. We first submitted this article in 2008, never imagining I'd inherit the manuscript as I assumed editorship.

Kathy Brashears provides readers with a glimpse of how educators can define and redefine culture as she explored the notion of culture with East Tennessee students convinced they possessed none. Kathy's insightful piece reminds us we all have stories; stories promote thinking, language, and understanding. Kathy assists us with using digital storytelling as well.

From Ohio, Francis Broadway, Ruth Oswald, and Denise Stuart share how to promote the establishment of community. Their thought-provoking piece specifically examines practicing teachers' understanding of community and the use of multicultural literature to explore social justice issues. They offer readers opportunity to consider how experience itself is a powerful teacher and how teachers' understanding of community may potentially impact classrooms.

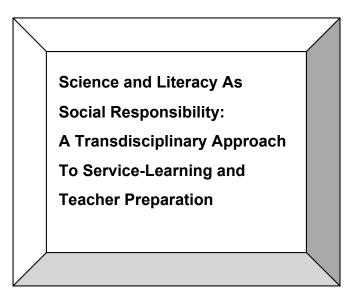
Maryland teacher educators, Patricia Dean and Laura Marasco, reveal how they established, nurtured, and maintained community through insightful use of literature and writing. They strike a chord with us, jogging our collective memory of how literature is a springboard for expanding awareness, understanding, and consciousness. Dean and Marasco also submitted in 2008.

The fifth and final manuscript by co-authored by educator, Akimi Sujishi-Watson, and Fulbright Scholar, J. Cynthia McDermott, embodies the tenacity, thoughtfulness, and ultimate responsibility of teachers everywhere. A case study of a California teacher, this manuscript extends understanding of how to always remain a child advocate despite tremendous pressure.

Andrea Karlin from Texas supplies readers with a provocative personal story and an invaluable list of multicultural alphabet books to increase children's global perspective in the Children's Literature Corner.

Brittany Wiegand, a Teach for America second year teacher, and Debra Mayes Pane, a Florida International University educator, both provide perceptive and discerning reviews of current books.

A special thanks to our efficient and proficient reviewers and our webmaster; they made this issue a reality. On behalf of the special interest group dedicated to literacy and social responsibility, read, dare to be wise. Enjoy ideas, celebrate thinking, explore links, and sample a little lagniappe!



BY: Pamela B. Blanchard and Margaret-Mary Sulentic Dowell

Keywords: science; social responsibility; literacy; text sets; stewardship; preservice education; environmental issues of local importance; restoration projects

ABSTRACT

Developing stewardship through a transdisciplinary approach fosters social responsibility when preservice teachers are taught to integrate subject matter around social issues. In turn, both preservice and in-service teachers can utilize projects such as the Louisiana State University's Coastal Roots Program as a means of teaching children how to be stewards of natural resources. Integrating science and literacy provides teachers at all levels with opportunities to read about social issues and use literature as a spring board for action and inquiry. Developing text sets around science and social issues that surround wetlands restoration is a viable way to integrate subject matter.

Developing Stewardship through Science and Literacy

Developing literacy and science practices that foster social responsibility is a multifaceted process that should be addressed at all levels of education. If students are to be nurtured and encouraged to become stewards, then their teachers need support to assist them. In turn, teacher educators need to consciously integrate issues of social responsibility with subject matter with preservice teachers so they can learn to teach from a socially responsible stance. Cunningham & Allington (2002) claim that in classrooms where children are taught to actively think, teachers have integrated science subject matter with reading and writing processes. Preparing preservice teachers to teach from a transdisciplinary approach by integrating science content and literacy practices assists them to educate children regarding social issues.

Science as Social Responsibility

Many locales in the United States are facing profound environmental problems. The problems are often complex and multi-faceted and impact society on many levels. One difficulty faced by these communities is how to increase the public's environmental eJournal of Literacy and Social Responsibility Volume 3 Number 1 Fall 2010

literacy regarding the problem at hand. Environmental literacy can be viewed as a progression of stages: awareness, concern, knowledge, and action (Roth, 1992). A number of K-12 environmental education programs at the K-12 level strive to raise students and teachers' awareness of and increase their knowledge about environmental and habitat issues of local importance as well as to actively involve them in restoration projects (Table 1). We suggest that these efforts to increase environmental literacy should also extend to the pre-service teacher population.

Table 1. Pre-college environmental stewardship restoration programs

Program (Sponsor, ordered by inception date)	Species	Goal
Salmonid Enhancement Program (Canada Fisheries & Oceans; 1970's)	Coho salmon	Promote education and understanding of Coho salmon, one of BC's natural resources
Bay Grasses in Classes (Tampa BayWatch, 1994)	Smooth cord grass To provide native wetland vegetation & hands-on experience in restoration	
Earth Partnership for Schools (Univ. of WI-Madison Arboretum, 1994)	Native tall prairie grasses	To establish a one-acre native prairie on the school site.
Aquaculture in Action (MD Sea Grant, 1998)	Striped bass and other fish species	Promote aquaculture as a "tool for teaching science"
Bay Grasses in Classes (MD Natural Resources & Chesapeake Bay Foundation, 1998)	Submerged aquatic grasses	To study the ecological importance of bay grasses and actively participate in restoration.
LSU Coastal Roots (LSU, 2000)	Coastal trees and grasses	To become aware of coastal habitat loss and actively participate in a habitat restoration project.

Schoolyard Spartina (National Aquarium, Baltimore, 2002)	Smooth cord grass	To become more aware of one's impact on wetlands and to provide a Bay Experience for each student.
Native Fish in the Classroom (LA Wildlife and Fisheries, 2004)		Promote an attitude of stewardship toward Louisiana's natural resources

Louisiana, like other locales, faces serious environmental problems. The recent oil well blow out in the deep waters of the Gulf of Mexico, the loss of 11 lives and the resulting simultaneous ecologic and economic disasters have played out on the front pages of newspapers and on news broadcasts nationwide since April 22, 2010. Images of oil-soaked birds and turtles, oiled marsh grass, floating oil, dirty containing booms, distraught locals, and tar balls washed up on formally beautiful beaches have daily documented the magnitude of the largest offshore environmental disaster in U.S. history. The environmental damage to the Gulf of Mexico fisheries, the marshes of south Louisiana and to the coastlines of the northeastern Gulf of Mexico is staggering.

On top of this recent disaster, another disaster has been unfolding slowly in Louisiana since the 1700's: Louisiana is losing its coastal land at a rate of 30 square miles (77.4 square kilometers) a year (Barras, et al., 2003). Between 1978 and 2000, Louisiana lost a total 658 square miles (1,704 square kilometers) of land, representing almost half the land area of the state of Rhode Island. Projected out to 2050, future land loss (2000-2050), with consideration for existing coastal restoration projects, is forecast to be 513 square miles (1329 square kilometers) (Barras, et al, 2003).

Land loss in Louisiana is the result of a number of both natural processes and human impacts. The leveeing of the Mississippi River, which began shortly after the city of New Orleans was established in the early 1700's, reduced and mostly eliminated the replenishment of sediment to the marshes. Levees shuttle the sediment carried by the Mississippi River into the deep waters of the Gulf of Mexico, rather than replenish sediment-starved wetlands through a myriad of natural bayous and streams into the coastal marshes. Other impacts include salt water intrusion, herbivory (e.g., by invasive species - nutria, *Myocastor coypus*), alterations to the natural waterflow within of coastal wetland systems, storm impacts, dam building in the upper reaches of the Mississippi River watershed, oil and gas exploration and related canal dredging, and harvesting of wetland forests (Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Task Force, 2003). Most recently, hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005 resulted in an estimated land loss of 217 square miles (526 square kilometers) (Barras, 2006). These two storm events represent nearly half of the projected net land loss for 2000-2050. Hurricanes

Gustav and Ike in 2008 also caused substantial damage to Louisiana's wetlands. Scientific research is underway to determine how or if Louisiana's coast will recover from this storm-related land loss.

The Coast 2050 Executive Summary (Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Task Force, 1998) recognizes the importance of these fragile coastal lands to the economic well-being of both Louisiana citizens and the nation and gives a clear call to action: "Stewardship requires us to care for and nurture what we have and what we are given. For the coast of Louisiana to survive, we must change the way we do business." (p. 11). Louisiana State University's (LSU) Coastal Roots (CR) Program was initiated in 2000 to provide a sustained, hands-on, school-based stewardship program offering students and teachers in grades 2-12 an opportunity to learn about these important issues and take positive actions to preserve and rebuild Louisiana's coast.

Overview of Coastal Roots

The primary goal of the CR Program is to assist students to develop an attitude of stewardship toward natural resources and to provide an active learning situation where they explore strategies for sustaining coastal ecosystems and develop an attitude of stewardship toward Louisiana's natural resources on the coast (Blanchard, 2007). Program components were developed based on a desire to make the program as hands-on as possible and integrated into school subjects. CR engages teachers and students with information on critical coastal environmental issues such as ecological stewardship, wetlands functions/values, wetland loss, habitat restoration & conservation, while at the same time emphasizing basic geologic and horticulture concepts and skills. CR includes school-based plant nurseries, restoration planting field trips, teacher professional development, and supporting program materials.

Elementary, middle and high school students manage an on-going, school-based native plant nursery that can produce 1,000 seedlings each year (Coleman & Bush, 2002). Schools are matched with a specific restoration site and site managers are encouraged to work with schools to select appropriate plants and educate the students about the specific needs of the site. The CR staff facilitates the installation of the nursery and assists with trouble-shooting for the plant nursery and logistics for the restoration trip. They also provide targeted professional development on coastal, geologic, and horticultural topics that specifically support the integration of the CR Program into school courses. Students gather their seedlings from their nurseries in the late fall or early spring for their annual trip to their restoration partner site. Students transplant their seedlings at the site and can see for themselves how their hard work is helping to restore and benefit the ecology of the site.

Prior to the hurricanes of 2005, Coastal Roots had 15 schools active in the program. The storms resulted in damage to several of the school nurseries and some teachers were relocated because of damaged or destroyed school buildings. Since 2005, the program has seen an increase in the number of participating schools. At the end of the 2010 academic year, there were 37 schools in 18 parishes (counties) in the program, with another three schools scheduled for installation in the fall of 2010. Since its inception in 2000, 4,945 students have produced and transplanted over 45,503 tree seedlings and grass plugs on 121 restoration trips.

Because the CR Program is used by second through twelfth grade teachers in a variety of subject areas (e.g. biology, Earth and environmental science, agriscience, social studies), and in a variety of formal and informal education structures (e.g., school, science clubs, 4-H clubs), there is no published curriculum associated with the project. Rather, teachers are introduced to a variety of resources that have been published by other agencies (i.e., maps, videos, Project WET, Project Learning Tree, Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Guide for Educators, Louisiana Sea Grant College Program's education materials). Links to this information are available on the CR website in the *Compendium of Coastal, Wetland, and Restoration Information* (Blanchard, 2009) (See http://coastalroots.lsu.edu).

Addressing Social Responsibility through Transdisciplinary Preparation & Teaching

From its inception CR needed a way to "hook" teachers and address the state of Louisiana's focus on improving reading. Hence, as two teacher educators at LSU, who share responsibility for training teachers, we created a way for preservice teachers to assist with the CR Program while also deepening their understanding of the use of literature in the classroom and transdisciplinary teaching associated with coastal restoration. In the first semester of their professional sequence, undergraduate educations majors at LSU must enroll in an intensive six hour reading course where they learn that using literature and providing access to books is a cornerstone of reading development (Neuman, 1999; Smith, Constantio, & Krashen, 1996). In their second semester, they are required to enroll in a science methods course. In the fall of 2007, part of the reading course requirements were to create text sets around the themes associated with coastal issues and restoration. LSU students brainstormed possible themes, based on what they knew about coastal restoration and environmental issues (See Figure 1). Then these students researched texts that fit each theme, generating a rich and varied source of text sets dealing with coastal restoration themes (See Appendix A). These text sets were then published online (as part of the CR website) as a section within the Compendium of Coastal, Wetland, and Restoration Information (Blanchard, 2009). These text sets and links to other coastal education

resources are ready to be accessed by students and teachers from across the state and globally. In their next semester, students learned firsthand about the ongoing work of CR while enrolled in their science methods course. Having created text sets, they were already engaged in the CR project and eager to participate further.

It is hard to watch the images of the recent events of the spring of 2010 off Louisiana's coast and remain unmoved. This terrible situation, as well as the impact of long term habitat and land loss in south Louisiana, is an opportunity for educators to engage students about environmental issues. In 2007, pre-service teachers identified text sets to help teach about Louisiana's environment. In May of 2010, another group of pre-service science methods students wrote lessons to teach about various aspects of the Deepwater Horizon disaster. The best of these lessons will join lessons submitted by practicing teachers and will be posted on the Louisiana Sea Grant College Program's education website (See http://www.lamer.lsu.edu) in the fall of 2010.

Conclusion

Teaching is truly a shared responsibility. When educators at all levels share the social responsibility of teaching, especially through a transdisciplinary approach in science and literacy, learning makes sense and change occurs for the better. Through this project, a rich set of texts were assembled for use by students, teachers and preservice teachers that augment the important work of the CR Project. Thus, this project exemplified the power of science and literacy as social responsibility.

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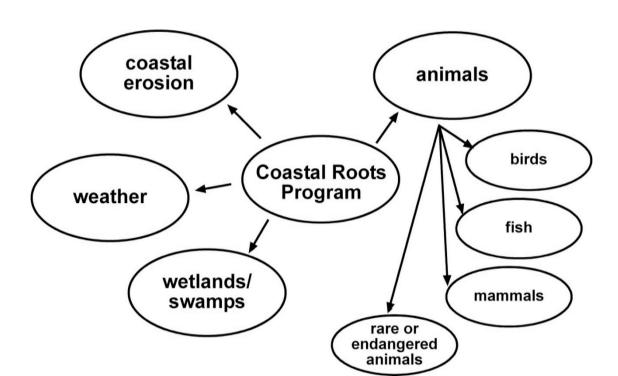


Figure 1. Coastal Roots Text Set Brainstorm Web

APPENDIX A

Text Sets

(* title also appears in another text set)

Text Set: Animals

- Allan, M. (2003). Five white egrets. New York, NY: iUniverse, Inc.
- Aloian, M. & Kalman, B (2006). *A wetland habitat*. New York, NY: Crabtree Publishing Company.*
- Andreae, G. & Wojtowycz, D. (1998). *Commotion in the ocean*. New York, NY: Scholastic.
- Appelt, K. (2002). *Where, where is swamp bear?* New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers.
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- Cushman, D. (1990). *Possum stew*. New York, NY: Dutton Juvenile.
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- Sovak, J. (2003). Learning about swamp animals. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications. *
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- Taylor, J. D. (1991). *Endangered wetland animals*. New York, NY: Crabtree Publishing Company.
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- Westcott, N. B. (1990). *Lady with the alligator purse*. New York, NY: Little, Brown, Young Readers.

Text Set: Coastal Erosion

- Baines, J. (2001). Coasts. London, United Kingdom: Hodder Wayland.
- Blaustein, D. (2000). *The Everglades and the Gulf Coast*. Salt Lake City, UT: Benchmark Books.
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Text Set: Trees and Plants

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- Kay, S. M. (2007). Roots of the cypress trees. Raleigh, NC: LuLu.
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Text Set: Weather

- Bennett, P. (1999). Flood. Mankato, MN: Black Rabbit Books.
- Berger, M., & Berger, G. (2004). *Hurricanes have eyes but can't see and other amazing facts about the weather.* New York, NY: Scholastic, Inc.
- Cole, J. (2006). *The magic school bus inside a hurricane*. New York, NY: Scholastic Press. *
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Text Set: Swamps and Wetlands

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Photo: Pam Blanchard showing students at Covington High School how to plant their bald cypress and swamp red maple seeds. *Photo credit: Deborah Nunez.*

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Photo left: Two middle school students from R.K. Smith Middle School in Luling, Louisiana, help plant their crop of tree seedlings at Bayou Segnette State Park. Bayou Segnette State Park, located just south of New Orleans, lost many of its mature trees to the winds of Hurricane Katrina. *Photo credit: Pam Blanchard.*

Photo right: Four middle school students from St. Louis King of France School in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, work together to plant bald cypress seedlings at Fontainebleau State Park, located on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain. Fontainebleau State Park lost 80% of its mature trees during Hurricane Katrina.

Photo credit: Pam Blanchard.

"I Don't *Have* Any Culture": Planning Opportunities For Pre-service Teachers to Develop Cultural Awareness

BY:

Kathy Brashears

Keywords: culture; cultural awareness; developing cultural awareness; teacher education; digital storytelling; local culture

ABSTRACT

In class today, our professor explains that we will each provide a short presentation about our own culture. A peer responds, "Well, I'm just White. I don't have any culture. At least not like Black people and, you know, minorities." I hold my breath while the instructor cocks her head and looks at the student. Her response is terse, "I think you need to check the definition of culture. (Author's field notes, 2002)

Experiences like these motivate me to address culture with my university students, preservice teachers. After all, as a former elementary school teacher and principal, I recognize my students' potential, as future educators, to foster an appreciation for other people—other cultures. In light of my goal to encourage cultural awareness, I embrace Ford and Whitings' (2007) following definition: "The term culture...denotes the integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thought, communication, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious, or social group..." (p. 53). More pointedly, Gollnick and Chinn (1998) suggest that,

Race is a concept that was developed by physical anthropologists to assist them in describing the physical characteristics of people in the world over a century ago—a practice that has now been discredited. Racial groups include many ethnic groups, and ethnic groups may include members of one or more racial groups. p. 85

Can you not synthesize both culture and race here as concepts important for future teachers? Based on these premises, both culture and race constitute important concepts for future teachers.

Empirical Evidence of Need

The purpose of this study is to explore how cultural awareness develops among preservice teachers. Such investigations are well grounded within the literature and, in fact, the need for such a study is twofold. First, the population of students, whose ethnicities are different than their teachers, is increasing. Specifically, the percentage of minorities, those outside the dominant White culture, is increasing in student populations. However, teachers across the United States tend to be members of a middle class, White culture. As a result of this disparity between teacher and students, there is a growing possibility that teachers may be unaware of how students' cultures influence learning. For example, The National Center of Education Information (http://www.ncei.com/POT05PRESSREL3.htm) confirms that while the majority of teachers employed in United States schools are White, middle class, and female, this description does not mirror the overall, national student population. As confirmation, the National Center for Educational Statistics (2010) reports the steadfast growth of minority populations (http://nces.ed.gov/). Specifically, the Pew Hispanic Center (2009) asserts that the Hispanic student population in the United States has more than doubled since 1980. Furthermore, the United States Census Bureau (2008) predicts, in another forty years, the Hispanic population in the United States will be at 54%. Stated differently, there is a growing possibility that teachers may be unaware of their students' cultures and how students' cultures influence learning. Smith (2009) sums up this phenomenon: "As the percentage of diverse students grows, it becomes increasingly important to sensitize teachers to the importance of culture and how it impacts the teaching and learning process" (p. 45).

Second, researchers suggest that effective teachers foster an appreciation of culture. Lee, Butler, and Tippins (2007) agree and advocate for cultural awareness, especially, among teachers:

As our schools and communities become more diverse, it becomes increasingly important for teachers to be well prepared for teaching and learning in cross-racial, cross-ethnic, and cross-cultural situations...This is essential if teachers are to help these children learn more securely and meet their needs more equally by providing a safe, challenging, and nurturing environment. (p. 43)

In fact, Delpit (1995; 2002), Kozol (1991), Brice-Heath (1983), Purcell-Gates (1995), and Rosenblatt (1996) all make cases for the need for cultural awareness. The National Council of Teachers of English (http://www.ncte.org/) and the International Reading Association (http://www.reading.org) also officially substantiate this need in the following standard: "Students will develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles."

The Quandary

In spite of all this evidence of need in regards to cultural awareness, research indicates that students and teachers sometimes demonstrate a lack of interest in their own culture and that of others. Kocabas (200) highlights the significance of this statement, "The formation of desirable behavior in the student is closely linked to the motivation levels of the teacher, as well as the teacher's attitude and behavior" (p. 724). In other words, teachers, who are not motivated to acknowledge or demonstrate an appreciation for culture, or who lack a positive attitude toward culture, are unlikely to have students who demonstrate an understanding of cultural awareness.

Purpose of Study

Situated in undergraduate classes, this qualitative study investigates the results of student interactions and responses to an assignment specifically designed to promote cultural awareness. Through the creation of digital stories to share their own culture, students reflect on their attitudinal shifts toward cultural awareness. As a result, this paper addresses how linking a technology assignment with social interaction fosters cultural awareness in one group of preservice teachers.

Setting and Participants

This study occurs in the literacy block portion of the 2 + 2 Elementary Education Program of a rural, southern, four-year university. Students, enrolled in the 2 + 2 Program have successfully completed the first two years at a partnering community college and have met the enrollment requirements of the university. Upon their acceptance into the program, students continue their education on the community college sites, but in student cohorts with university professors. Unlike the main university campus, the site in which I teach is located in an East Tennessee suburban area. Typically, students making up these cohorts include non-traditional students who, for a variety of reasons, take off a few years between high school and completing a college degree. Many also face family responsibilities, scheduling challenges, or distance issues that limit their opportunities to attend a four-year institution. Some students, however, just prefer attending classes in their local community and/or enjoy smaller campuses. Specifically, the cohort, participating in this study, is made up of 21 juniors with 7 males and 14 females. All of the students are White, four are parents, and, with the exception of two students, all are from the southern regions of the United States. Within this particular group, all students, with the exception of one, who is more than forty years of age, are in their twenties or early thirties.

Problem

After earning a doctorate from the University of Kentucky in 2004, I returned home to East Tennessee where I accepted a position as a tenure track professor and began teaching literacy courses for both undergraduate and graduate students---some of whom were my former high school classmates and others my former first grade students. Being from this Appalachian region, I was fully aware of the lack of non White population and cultural difference within local and neighboring communities. For example, according to the Tennessee State Department Report (2000), the county in which I grew up has a population of approximately 96% White. Similarly, the county in which I now teach most of my classes is approximately 88% White. However, within the same county and/or surrounding counties there are some schools with more than 80 percent African-American enrollment and a growing Hispanic population.

In light of this data, I have presented numerous times in the past six years at state and national conferences, specifically via children's literature and writing, on the importance of fostering an appreciation and tolerance of cultures different from our own. My recognition of this need is reflected, too, in the development of assignments in which students, preservice teachers, first examine their own backgrounds before considering how their cultures and that of their students' cultures might impact classroom practices. In developing assignments, I specifically considered Shealy, Lue, Brooks, and McCray's (2005) following words:

...there is a need to examine the extent to which teachers' beliefs and attitudes about students of color affect the instructional practices they elect to use in their classrooms, which consequently influences teachers' ability to engage students and their families in the education process. (p. 119)

Therefore, when a student's response to a particular cultural assignment was "I don't get the point," I was dismayed. Although I tried to engage Teresa (all student names are pseudonyms---exceptions are noted), a native East Tennessean, in what she would not only learn about her self, but others as well, she was steadfast. Teresa, a non-traditional student, insisted that the assignment would take her many hours and that it was a complete waste of time.

When she continued her response by saying, "I already know my culture. What difference does any of it make?" I mentally made connections back to the literature. Although Delpit (1995; 2002) mainly refers to work with African Americans, her observance regarding teachers who do not recognize their own culture is both compelling and disturbing. Unfortunately, if Delpit (1995; 2002) is right in her

assumptions, I recognize that this particular preservice teacher would be unlikely, perhaps even unable to foster an appreciation of culture among her students.

Realizing what was at stake and not willing to give up easily, I asked Teresa to think about the possibility of sharing her culture with future students—especially students outside the dominant culture. She replied, "Around here we've all got the same culture and other kinds of people don't tend to stay long." Her belief that she would never or only briefly interact with people different from herself allowed her to dismiss the need to understand and appreciate other cultures. Simply stated, she saw no need to delve into what she considered the obvious—shared culture of the community—or that which she considered fleeting—culture represented by minorities. However, to say that this type of attitude prevails in Appalachia would be misrepresenting the region. On the other hand, to ignore that this attitude is sometimes a shared one among some communities would be erroneous. As an Appalachian and educator I believe, whatever the case, promoting an understanding of cultures, that of our own and that of others, is important work.

Empowered by this belief and not willing to concede, I pointed out that the sameness of cultural representation within some communities might be all the more reason to share the importance of culture with students. Passionately, I shared my perspective that the world is a big place, and, maybe, her students would one day have the opportunity to explore it, meet new types of people, and witness other cultures. While her response was a steely stare and folded arms, I became more determined the next semester to find innovative and motivating ways to encourage cultural awareness within preservice teachers. I was convinced that Delpit held the key: Recognizing and understanding our own culture is the first step in appreciating other cultures. In fact, in light of Kobocas' (2009) findings that "The enthusiasm of the teacher in daily activities has a significant impact on increasing the students' motivation levels" (p. 725), fostering an appreciation for culture among preservice teachers seemed particularly important.

The Plan to Develop Cultural Awareness

In the 2009 fall semester, August – December I was provided with an opportunity to teach, not only literacy courses for a cohort of twenty-one preservice teachers, but also an English Language Learner (ELL) course for the same group of students. While concentrating on strategies, assessments, differentiated instruction, children's literature, and multiple intelligences in regards to course objectives encompassing the teaching of reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and visually representing, I planned to introduce and integrate the importance of cultural awareness.

I kept this latter objective foremost in mind as I read widely, integrated material, and considered assignments that would address new literacies. After reading Gee's

(2007) work regarding multi-literacies and technology and reviewing Vygotsky's (1986) findings on the importance of social interaction, I decided to use technology as a motivating means to address both course objectives and cultural awareness. After much investigation, I planned for my students to use technology to create digital stories on their own cultures. Through the development of digital stories, they would exercise both the reading and writing processes and address most, if not all, of the language arts, as well as many of the multiple intelligences. In addition, social interaction would occur not only during the presentation of the digital stories, but also during the creation of the stories as peers shared information about current technology and participated in peer conferencing regarding the written portion of their projects.

Lee and Dallman (2008) lent additional support for my plan: "...[M]aking voices and listening to others' experiences and thoughts about diversity and multicultural education are important aspects of teachers' knowledge constructions, letting them make sense socially" (p. 36). They further advocate "...that opportunities to share personal backgrounds and experiences with peers will help teachers develop openminded attitudes and closely examine their own beliefs about diversity in light of the beliefs of others" (p. 43). With these thoughts in mind, I created my syllabus and prepared to explain the assignment to my preservice teachers.

Although it sounds so simple, create a digital story to represent your culture, the process was somewhat laborious due to the lack of consistency in the kinds of technology available outside of our classroom. To address these challenges we discussed technology options and viewed websites like Digital Storytelling: Using Technology to Tell Stories

(http://www.umass.edu/wmwp/DigitalStorytelling/Digital%20Storytelling%20Main%20Page.htm) that provide step-by-step instructions for creating digital stories. As a result, some students opted to use Microsoft PowerPoint© while others chose IMovies© or Windows Movie Maker©. All students included photographs scanned from family photograph albums or downloaded photos or images from cell phones, digital cameras, and/or computers. They also enhanced their digital stories through voice recordings and various snippets of music. Throughout the semester, they, too, reflected with their peers on the process of creating a digital story. As the facilitator, I steered conversations to reflect the positive rather than allowing talk to dwell on the negative. For example, during class discussions I directed students to pair-share two positive results or technology applications they had encountered in creating their digital stories. Over time, students became less likely to complain about technology and more likely to problem solve challenges with their peers.

After tackling technology issues and considering the specific requirements of the assignment (see Appendix A), as a class we viewed a plethora of digital story examples

via the internet. At http://www.knoxnews.com/videos/detail/old-vine-avenue/ we even found digital stories featuring our local area and the African American community during the early 1960's. While sharing various digital story examples, brainstorming, and providing both technical and moral support, students made decisions regarding their cultural assignment. Some students developed their culture presentation by focusing on family history and stories. Still others simply shared what culture had come to mean to them while researching the definition of culture and applying it to their own lives.

Results of a Cultural Assignment Data Processes

Following the suggestions of Miles and Huberman (1994) regarding qualitative data, I gathered the data – digital stories, student reflections, and my notes on class discussions and student presentations. I then read through the data multiple times and made notations on which to reflect further. As I continued this process to the point of saturation, three themes emerged.

First, students acknowledged that technology, while challenging, did provide motivation in some cases. Second, social interaction became an important part of the assignment and, perhaps, was an equally motivating factor. The third aspect, as well as the focus of this paper, was evidence that students not only developed cultural awareness regarding their own culture, but became aware and appreciative of their peers' cultures as well. More importantly, some students made connections as to how this assignment influenced and informed their thinking as future teachers.

Technology

On the day students presented their digital stories, not only did students clap for each other, they commiserated with each other about the process they had gone through to complete the assignment. Specifically, they spoke about technology difficulties and their frustration in not immediately pinpointing how they wanted to precede with the assignment. They also talked of the large amount of time involved in using the technology and revising, as well as editing, their work.

On the other hand, they, too, talked and later wrote about their positive, technology experiences. For example, Richie, a single male who is approximately 23 years old and Lance, a married father of two, shared their excitement and success in using new technologies. Later, Kasie, a student in her early twenties, further commented, "Technology was a motivating factor", and Lance as well as Richie agreed. Still later Richie admitted, "Technology was a little hard for me to learn. But I am really grateful that I learned this skill because now I will be able to use it in future assignments and in my own classroom some day." As testament to their feelings regarding the worth of the assignment, many posted their digital stories on the university's private, technology blackboard, allowing them easy access to their own and

their classmates' digital stories. Hopefully, using technology is this way will bode well for their roles as classroom teachers in fostering an understanding of cultures. Because of the widespread availability of technology advancements in shared communications and the great need for cultural understanding, it, therefore, seems logical to marry the two – technology and the promotion of cultural awareness.

Social interactions

As planned, at least in some cases, technology served to promote social interaction. For example, some students talked about meeting with others outside, of class to both give and receive help in using new software. Students, too, shared other social interactions prompted by the assignment. For example, Cade, a native East Tennessean said, for the first time, he spent one-on-one time chatting with his grandfather and enjoyed the visits so much he was now planning to make them part of his weekly routine. Lance also shared his mother's enthusiasm in showing him hundreds of family photographs while Mary, born outside of Tennessee, spoke about contacting family members in another state and their eagerness to share family stories.

Brandy (real name), a young mother and another East Tennessean later wrote.

This was a very valuable project for me. It was especially valuable because I did an "I Am" poem, but instead of making up my own things...I asked my family to tell me the one thing that stands out the most about our family...I used their answers to create the poem. (Personal correspondence, 2009).

The following poem provides the basis of Brandy's digital story.

I AM by Brandy Carter

I am from Carter, Balltrip, Davis and Burgess

From all different shapes and sizes and colors of the rainbow

I am from curly hair and smooshy noses From butter lovin' and Mamaw's home cookin'

I am from holidays, cookouts, and birthdays at Mamaw's, and sometimes all-in-one From never needing to be told what time to be there Cause it's always the same

I am from "Go to college to get smart" and "Go to church to get wise" From beauty is only skin deep and treat others how you want to be treated

I am from close knit family and talking all at once From mother knows best, even when she is wrong I am from work hard, play hard, and love with all your heart I am from work hard, play hard, and love with all your heart From sarcasm and "Don't be so sarcastic!"

I am from "Good, more for me" and "Be generous to a fault!" From papaw's purple medicine and a kiss makes it all better

I am from chaotic family gatherings with buck wild kids, moms going crazy, mamaw getting the dog in the back bedroom, Aunt Non freaking out, Sherry and Terrie laughing and Pam and Gary by the grill relaxing.

From still missing papaw years later; his baking, his stories, his laugh, his presence I am from "If you yike it, you yick it"

From ketchup, ketchup, and...ketchup

I am from people who love me, who have taught me to love myself and others; And I love them

Cultural Awareness

When reflecting on the digital story presentation, students made several provocative comments. For example, after the assignment, Betty, a mother of two, simply acknowledged, "I was "...clueless about what my culture was" before completing my digital story (Author, personal correspondence, 2009). Tabitha, a native East Tennessean, echoed her friend's sentiment:

At first I was not excited about the assignment because I thought it was going to be lots [of] busy work. I figured all of our cultures would be so closely related since we all live in the South...I completely changed my mind about the assignment. I cried in almost every presentation given. I think it made us closer as a class and it also helped me understand where my classmates are all from. (Author, personal correspondence, 2009)

Another student, Kathy, not a native of Tennessee, also shared a newly acquired insight: She once believed that culture was stagnant, but now believed it evolves. Mary supported her classmate's observation by sharing that while she was unaware, her culture had changed and was changing. She said that her newly, evolving culture encompasses some of the cultural practices of her husband whose parents are originally from Mexico. Bethany, who has lived in more than one southern state, also explained that the assignment had forced her, for the first time, to consider her own culture and, as a result, she would now define her culture by including cultural aspects of both her adoptive parents and biological mother.

As I had hoped, some students also discovered bits of family history. For example, they learned of ancestors who had immigrated from Germany, Ireland, and Scotland. Comments were made about the impact of different languages on their ancestors' immigration to the United States. In response, students suddenly stopped

talking and appeared to be in thought. From the back of the room, Bob, who has lived in East Tennessee all his life, quietly commented that the experience of sharing and listening to others' cultures would be helpful if he one day had an opportunity to work with students whose ethnicities were different from his own. While Ashley and Sandy nodded, Bob continued, "You think about it. We all have roots someplace other than here." When Charles responded, "You know, while we've...lots of similarities, our differences are what makes us interesting."

I silently rejoiced: Students were acknowledging the importance of culture, and celebrating their own culture as well. In fact, Terry summed up the class responses this way: "...[A] lot of us thought right off the bat, we have no culture. But we learned otherwise :o)" (Author, personal correspondence, 2009).

Conclusion

My students' reflections are particularly poignant when coupled with Lappo's (2007) words: "Research indicates that, under certain conditions, course work readings and activities can raise preservice teachers' awareness of diversity in terms of cultures, families, and communication styles..." (p. 40). Perhaps, Cassie best summarizes the impact of the digital story assignment:

The main value...[of the cultural presentation]... was showing us all we do have culture. To understand other's cultures, I think you have to understand your own first...[T]his assignment was a good way for us to explore our own, and learn about others. (Author, personal correspondence, 2009)

In consideration of Lappo's work and my students' reflections, I can safely say combining technology and social interaction to address course objectives did promote cultural awareness within this small group of preservice teachers.

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Appendix A

Assignment Four: Revised rubric for Cultural Presentation Assignment The purpose of this assignment is to explore your own culture. By understanding our own culture, we can better appreciate other cultures.

Content of Digital Story:

- 1. What does the word "culture" mean to you? Tell us who you are and about your culture.
- 2. Identify words or phrases (at least five) that you and/or your family use. Discuss possible origins and related information.
- 3. You may use photographs or pictures, drawings, clipart...to tell us about your culture.
 - eJournal of Literacy and Social Responsibility Volume 3 Number 1 Fall 2010

Digital Storytelling	10-8	6-4	2-0
Technology	The student made certain that the technology used in the presentation was compatible with the available technology provided in the classroom.	The technology used was somewhat compatible with the technology provided in the classroom.	The technology used was not compatible with the technology provided in the classroom.
Organization	The digital story is well organized and easily followed. It lasts between 3 and 4 minutes.	The digital story is somewhat organized and fairly easy to follow. It lasts between 2 and 3 minutes.	The digital story lacks in organization and is confusing to the audience. It lasts less than 2 minutes.
Visual Literacy: photographs, pictures, video clips, clipart	The use of picturesenhances the story.	The use of pictures somewhat enhances the story.	The use of pictures does little to help with the telling of the story.
Voice	The student uses his/her voice to tell the story.	The student includes some voice recordings.	The student does not record his/her voice.
Social Interaction	The significance of social interaction was well documented in the presentation itself or in supporting documents.	The significance of social interaction was somewhat well documented in the presentation itself or in supporting documents.	The significance of social interaction was not well documented in the presentation itself or in supporting documents.
Error Free	The digital story is clearly presented and free of grammatical and other errors.	The digital story is presented in a rather clear fashion and has few errors of any kind.	The story line is confusing, and the presentation has several errors.
Creativity	The digital story has several creative elements.	The digital story has few creative elements.	The story does not showcase the author's creativity.



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Practicing Teachers Understanding of Community

BY: Francis S. Broadway, Ruth A. Oswald, Denise H. Stuart

Keywords: community; community of learners; developing community; participatory citizenship, social responsibility; teacher education; in-service education; standards; use of literature; and appreciation for diversity in teachers

ABSTRACT

Educational literature supports establishing a "community" of learners in our classrooms. Current professional standards such as The International Reading Association's (IRA) Standards for Reading Professionals (2008) state community has a role in teaching and learning, yet what is community? The focus of the study presented here was specifically to examine practicing teachers' understanding of community. As a qualitative inquiry, practicing teachers enrolled in a curriculum course at the University of Akron were asked to develop a series of written responses to specific questions. Using prior knowledge, they first considered their own definitions of curriculum, pedagogy and the educational purpose the school should seek to attain. Then the multicultural book, *Nokum is My Teacher* by <u>David Bouchard</u> was shared as they continued their thinking, more specifically about community, curriculum, and pedagogy. These written responses were analyzed for this exploratory study in an effort to discover how practicing teachers define, describe, and envision community. Analysis revealed that as these teachers articulated their understanding of the concept of community as issues of culture and community, the individual and community, and purposes of community. These findings support the usefulness of well-written and illustrated multicultural literature to explore social justice issues. Moreover, the need continues to make explicit the talk and the experience of diverse communities and the impact on the learner.

Background

There is extensive support in educational literature for the establishment of a "community" of learners in current classrooms and an emphasis on the value of fostering the social nature of learning through collaboration and productive learning conversations (Vygotsky, 1978; Short & Burke, 1991; Barron and Darling-Hammond,

2008; Lewison, Leland & Harste, 2008). But exactly what is community? What defines community?

Schools are located in a physical space. If that space is a place, an "embodiment of a purposefully created space that is a creation and enactment of the cultural and social conditions of participants" (Perez, Fain, & Slater, 2004, p. 1) or according to Till (2001), "the cultural and spatial context within which we construct and locate our individual and collective identities" (as cited in Whitlock, 2007, p. 2), then, a space becomes a place. A collection of places may be labeled a community whereby "communities provide places for strangers to get their bearing and to live without their difference constantly before them, they also highlight that difference and introduce debates about how to live as the marked being" (Phelan, 2001, p. 112). Hence, a "community is by its very nature both inclusive ('us') and exclusive ('them')" (Noddings, 2002, p.10).

Although there are many forms of community in terms of membership, belief, and value, "community is a complex of physical, social, and psychological relationships that change and evolve through time and the generations of people who identity with it (Cajete, 2000, p. 91). In other words like all identities, a community contests, decenters, disrupts, and rejects itself because "individual and group identities are perceived as equally semantically and socially dynamic, open, plural, conflicting, or contingent rather than fixed closed, unitary, consensual, or set" (Edwards, 2005, p. 60). Therefore, communities are more than the sum and likeness of people and their cultures in a fixed location. In other words, communities, as a figment (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985), may not be something other than spaces. Community, as these spaces, "provide[s] – a sense of belonging, of caring for one another, of sharing in a coherent tradition" (Noddings, 2002, p. 70); hence community is not grounded in location, but in those places and spaces claimed by its members. Furthermore, community is the cradle of culture. However, community does not swaddle culture.

If culture is "the common patterns of behavior, beliefs, and rituals marking the life of a society in its various manifestations [that] could be understood through the attentive observation of the behavior of the actors in the society under study and the rituals they share" (Hamel, 1993, p. 3), then culture does not represent community, but conversely, to understand culture, community must be understood as a context. Therefore in order to become a cultural reading professional, culturally relevant reading professional or multicultural reading professional, the authors posit that reading professionals must understand the community in which they work. Furthermore, the authors suggest that understanding community, which can "simply [mean] our endless connection and responsibility for, each other" (Baldwin, 1985, p. 122), is paramount in preparing reading professionals to engage in:

understanding, the relations among academic knowledge, the state of society, the processes of self-formation, and the character of the historical moment in which we live, in which others have lived, and in which our descendents will someday live. It is understanding that informs the ethical obligation to care for ourselves, and our fellow human beings, that enables us to think and act with intelligence, sensitivity, and courage in both the public sphere – as citizens aspiring to establish a democratic society – and in the private sphere, as individuals committed to other individuals. (Pinar, 2004, p. 187)

Thus, as pointed out by Heath (2004), the understanding of community may be shifting. Many of today's youth do not see their identity as that of a single ethnic group, place, or family, but rather "pick and choose, change and reshape their affiliations of primary socialization" (p. 160). Teachers in today's 21st century classrooms need to have a deep, sustained understanding of community, because the implications of this understanding are critical in meeting the learning needs of the nation's increasingly diverse student population. The purpose of this article is to report the findings from an inquiry conducted with practicing teachers in a graduate curriculum course regarding their concepts of the role of community in the curriculum through literacy.

The diversity of students in our public PK-12 schools continues to increase significantly. The National Center for Education Statistics (2008) reported that the percentage of racial/ethnic minority students enrolled in the nation's public schools increased from 22 percent in 1972, to 31 percent in 1986, to 43 percent in 2006. According to Futrell, Gomez and Bedden's (2003) discussion of teaching in the "new America," statistical projections indicate that the percentage of students of color will increase, reaching 51% by 2050. In addition, approximately 25% of children live in poverty. In their call for the preparation of culturally responsive teachers, Villegas and Lucas (2002) reported that more than 1 in 7 children between the ages of 5 and 17 spoke a language other than English at home, and more than one third of these children had limited proficiency in English.

The cultural gap between children and teachers in public schools is great and increasing. According to Sleeter and Grant, in 2003, over 90% of the nation's teachers were White, and this percentage was increasing. Sleeter (2001) reported that the research in this area was limited and that predominantly White higher education institutions have generally not responded to this cultural gap between teachers and students in public schools. She recommended that pre-service programs either address the issue by recruiting more teacher candidates from culturally diverse communities or by trying to develop the multicultural knowledge base of predominantly White cohorts of teacher candidates.

The International Reading Association's <u>Standards for Reading Professionals</u> (2008) include an emphasis on attention to diversity and community. With the understanding that the Standards are written with hegemonic, hierarchical development expressed as grade-bands, it is important to note that community, as a term, concept, and construct, appears in Standards 4 and 6 as displayed below in Tables 1 and 2. (Note that this information comes from the 2008 draft of these Standards; the 2010 Standards for Reading Professionals will be available August, 2010).

Table 1: Standard 4

Standard 4 - Diversity:

The candidates create and engage their students in literacy practices that develop awareness, understanding, respect and a valuing of differences in our society.

- 4.1.2 Understand the impact of urban, suburban, and rural environments on local culture, language, and learning to read and write.
- 4.2.1 Assess the various forms of diversity that exist in students as well as in the surrounding community.
- 4.2.3 Provide instruction and instructional materials that are linked to students' backgrounds (e.g., cultural, linguistic, religious-ethnic, gender, and class), and which also acquaint students with others' traditions and diversity.
- 4.3 Develop strategies to lead and advocate for tolerance and equity in work with students in and outside school settings.
- 4.3.1 Provide students with linguistic, academic, and cultural experience that links their community and school experiences.
- 4.3.2 Advocate for change in societal practices and institutional structures that are inherently biased or prejudices against certain groups (e.g., candidates might be prepared to engage their students in service learning projects in the local community.)
- 4.3.3 Demonstrate how community and/or service learning can be incorporated as part of the formal school and literacy curriculum.
- 4.3.4 Demonstrate how issues of inequity and opportunities for social justice activism in students' communities can be incorporated into the literacy curriculum.
- 4.3.5 Demonstrate resiliency as they interact respectfully and effectively with a variety of students and their families; teachers and other educators and other community members within and beyond schools.

Table 2: Standard 6

Standard 6 - Professional Learning and Leadership:

Candidates view professional learning and leadership as a career-long effort and responsibility.

- 6.2 Display positive dispositions related to one's own reading and writing and the teaching of reading and writing in working with students, parents, colleagues and the community.
- 6.2.2 Work with families, colleagues and communities to support students' learning.
- 6.5 Understand the ways in which local, state, and national policy decisions influence their instruction and how they can impact policy and advocate on behalf of students and the community.

Specifically, Standard 4 acknowledges that in addition to gender and sexual identities, students are linguistically, religiously, ethically, academically, economically, and culturally different. These diverse students live in a location that surrounds the schools. Furthermore, these locations outside the school setting have traditions and diversity as well as a local culture and language. The *Standards for Reading Professionals* capture these locations as community. Although not specifically defined in the *Standards for Reading Professionals*' Glossary, a community is the background and experiences that need to be incorporated into the formal school and literacy curriculum and impact the learning to read and write in order for individuals to advocate for social justice.

In terms of professional learning and leadership, the <u>Standards for Reading Professionals</u> (2008) insist that reading professionals work with the community to support the learning of students. Reading professionals are advocates for the community that surround schools in addition to its students. Hence, reading professionals must display positive dispositions in working with the community. Clearly the *Standards for Reading Professional* describe, demand, and require that the community has a role, a place, and great import in the teaching and learning of reading, but for reading professionals, what is community? In other words, for this exploratory research study, how do reading professionals (practicing teachers) define, describe, and envision community?

The Qualitative Inquiry

This qualitative study was conducted by the three authors of this manuscript, researchers who teach in the Master of Arts in Education program at the University of

Akron, and includes the instructor of record for the course. The participants, practicing teachers from Summit, Wayne, and Stark counties in Ohio, generated a series of reflective writings before and after reading a selected text as part of a final examination that spanned throughout the course. The process for developing these was grounded in constructivist approaches and transactional analysis to literature. The multicultural book, Nokum Is My Teacher (Bouchard, 2006) was used in this curriculum course to examine how an understanding of community fosters participatory citizenship, social responsibility and appreciation for diversity in teachers, their teaching, and a graduate program at an urban institution of higher education.

The text purposefully selected for this exercise, *Nokum Is My Teacher* by David Bouchard (2006), is a poetic dialogue between a young aboriginal Cree boy and his "Nokum," his grandmother. Allen Sapp, noted artist of classic paintings of First Nation community life, beautifully illustrated authentic <u>Cree</u> community in this stunning picture book. The story, told in both English and Cree (in print and on a companion CD with music by the <u>Northern Cree Drumming Group</u>), is about the boy's wonderings of why he should learn to read and if there is knowledge of value outside of the reserve. His teacher has told him that "her books were key to understanding nature," yet he has always relied on the stories and wisdom of his Nokum to teach him. He asks "do you think White world is meant for me?" and struggles with, "Do you think they care at all about our ways, about our culture?" His Nokum, who never learned to read, answers him artfully with questions that guide him to conclude that he can learn more about both worlds through reading.

Participants

The participants (n=20) in the inquiry were graduate students enrolled in the Master of Arts in Elementary Education program with a concentration in literacy as members of a cohort that met off campus. Author 1 of this article was their instructor for this three-semester credit, curriculum course. This course is generally taken early in their 36 credit program which includes educational foundation courses (nine credits), general curriculum courses, (six credits) and 15 credits of concentration, in this case literacy. The students enrolled complete their program with a six-credit capstone project, an action research. The participants were all licensed, practicing teachers, and their years of teaching experience ranged from 1 to 26 years with a mean of 7.5 \pm SD=7.0 years. The participants were all White females and their ages ranged from 23 to 52 years old with a mean of 33.8 \pm SD=10.0 years. These graduate students teach in classrooms ranging from K-12 with ten of them in the position of intervention specialists or tutors. The following table displays the typology of districts in which the participants teach as determined by the state of [blinded] Department of Education.

Table 3: District Typology

Category	[blinded] Department of Education	Number of
Number	Typology Description Ohio Department of Education, 2007)	Participants
	Rural/agricultural – high poverty, low median income	
1		3
	These districts are rural agricultural districts and tend to be	
	located in the Appalachian area of [blinded]. As a group they	
	have higher-than-average poverty, the lowest average median income level, and the lowest percent of population with college	
	degree or higher compared to all of the groups.	
	Rural/agricultural – small student population, low poverty, low	
2	to moderate median income	7
	These tend to be small, very rural districts outside of	
	Appalachia. They have an adult population that is similar to	
	districts in Group 1 in terms of education level, but their median income level is higher and their poverty rates are much	
	lower.	
	Urban – low median income, high poverty	
4	This category includes urban (i.e. high population density)	3
	districts that encompass small or medium size towns and	
	cities. They are characterized by low median incomes and	
	very high poverty rates.	
	Urban/Suburban – high median income	4
6		4
	These districts typically surround major urban centers. While their poverty levels range from low to above average, they are	
	more generally characterized as communities with high median	
	incomes and high percentages of college completers and	
	professional/administrative workforce.	
	Non Dublio Coboolo	2
	Non-Public Schools	3

The majority of the teachers work in rural settings where few individuals complete higher education, but the districts in which they teach represent a wide range of income levels. Generally, the community and student populations in these rural school districts are predominately White.

Data Collection

Data was collected as a series of written reflections generated both in and out of class by the participants throughout a semester. Following a brief (less than five minutes) introduction during the first class meeting of the graduate course, *Concepts of Curriculum*, teachers were given directions for a two-part "final examination." Part 1 was completed at the beginning of the semester and Part 2 was completed at the end of the semester corresponding to the scheduled final examination date and time. Furthermore, Part 1 consisted of two activities, one focusing on definition of curriculum and pedagogy (Part 1a) and the other focusing on the illustration of the definitions of curriculum and pedagogy through the construct of community (Part 1b).

Constructivism (Fosnot, 1996) as an epistemology was the primary paradigm for the final examination. As constructivism is predicated on prior knowledge and experience, Part 1a of the final examination required teachers to make public, unfold, and present the "prior" knowledge they had concerning the terms curriculum and pedagogy as well as their ideas about schooling: In terms of curriculum and pedagogy, what educational purpose should the school seek to attain? In other words, if the focus of the course was to influence teachers' construct of curriculum and pedagogy, then any pedagogy, albeit usually limited to instruction, had to be formulated around the knowledge and experiences that teachers brought to their graduate studies.

Additionally, in terms of power within pedagogy, the final examination was given to teachers so they knew for what they were responsible. This removed much of the power of the instructor in order to move the class toward a democratic classroom. For purposes of this study, only one part of the data (Part 1b) was used though the context of its development is described here to illustrate the development of participants' thinking over time.

After the final examination was disseminated, teachers were asked to read the instructions for Part 1a responding to these three questions:

- 1. What is curriculum?
- 2. What is pedagogy?
- 3. In terms of curriculum and pedagogy, what educational purpose should the school seek to attain?

Teachers were asked in class to respond to the questions without reference to texts and then to email the responses to the instructor at the end of the class meeting. Then

teachers were encouraged to continue their thinking about the three questions, add to their writing, and again email this final response to the instructor approximately 24 hours after the beginning of the response. Because analysis of the Part 1a set of data revealed that these practicing teachers were not thinking about curriculum and pedagogy contextually, the instructor used children's literature to situate the definition of curriculum and pedagogy.

At the second class meeting, the teachers addressed Part 1b of the final examination as they reconsidered their conceptual and operational definition of curriculum and pedagogy through a transactional analysis (Rosenblatt, 1976) of *Nokum Is My Teacher* (Bouchard, 2006) by specifically addressing these four questions:

- a. What community did the author try to create?
- b. Explain, both conceptually and operationally, the curriculum that exists within *Nokum Is My Teacher*.
- c. Describe the pedagogy in Nokum Is My Teacher.
- d. As the young man (narrator) in *Nokum Is My Teacher* enters a classroom, what is a teacher's moral responsibility in regard to teaching the young man (narrator of this book)?

The audio recording of *Nokum Is My Teacher* was played in English twice, as all teacher participants were first language English speakers. Teachers were asked to gather in groups to have an open discussion concerning *Nokum Is My Teacher* as well as their definitions of curriculum and pedagogy that they sent to the instructor before class. When groups felt ready to respond to the aforementioned questions, they worked independently to construct responses. These responses from Part 1b, like the ones in Part 1a were emailed to the instructor and served as the primary data source for this investigation.

Finally, at the end of the semester, during the regulated final examination period, the teacher participants addressed Part 2 of the final examination:

- 1. What educational purpose should the school seek to attain?
- 2. What curricular **and** pedagogical experiences are likely to provide students to attain these purposes? (p. 1).
 - 2a. What is your operational definition of curriculum?
 - 2b. What is your operational definition of pedagogy?

Moreover, the directions required the respondents to include quotes form their work during the course as well as readings, projects, and materials used in class.

Data Analysis

As noted above, one set of data was analyzed for the study reported here to

explore how teachers as reading professionals define, describe, and envision community. Part 1b writing of the final examination was generated through procedures described above after reading *Nokum Is My Teacher* and focused on curriculum, pedagogy and community. A constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was conducted as the three researchers read the data independently, initially coded for categories related to community, discussed, then collapsed the data. What emerged were the themes presented in the results section below.

Additionally, the teachers in the study participated in the analysis process. Six months after Part 1b data was collected, most of the practicing teachers from the Curriculum course were still together as a cohort and enrolled in an Action Research course taught by author 2. This is a capstone course for their graduate program. The instructor removed all identifiers from the Part 1b data collected in the Curriculum course and took it back to the participants, asking the practicing teachers to analyze the data, looking for themes related to community. Since this was a class activity, participation was not strictly voluntary. The participants reached consensus after extensive discussion. Thus they practiced data analysis, a requirement for the Action Research course, and served as research assistants for this study. It must be noted that personal bias is a limitation of this type of data analysis as many of these participants recognized their own responses. However, the extensive discussion about the emerging themes related to community promoted objectivity as these participants considered classmates' perspectives in reaching consensus. This combined thematic analysis by researchers and participant teachers led to the themes reported below.

Results

From a transactional analysis of *Nokum Is My Teacher*, the teachers defined, described, and envisioned community. Several framed community in "literal" or "figurative" terms. For the purposes of this study, literal referred to community of physical proximity, such as the school or town where people physically gathered together. For instance, one teacher offered, "In my opinion there are two ways to interpret community: literally and figuratively. Bouchard has two literal communities, Cree...and 'White world'." Another teacher explained, "The literal definition of community is the people with whom you surround yourself." The "figurative" was the richer of the descriptions which presented the complexity of purpose, blending, conflict and other elements of community. As an example one teacher shared, "The figurative community that Bouchard creates is the loving relationship between the young man and his grandmother and the respect the young man has for his culture."

Through analysis, three major themes emerged as teachers considered community. The three themes were: (1) culture and community which included cultural groups and interaction among cultures; (2) the individual and community which

addressed affective issues of community membership; and (3) purpose and community which described shared goals and interests of a community.

Culture and Community

The issue of culture and community was the most prevalent theme. Some teachers defined community as the cultural group, "Bouchard has two literal communities, Cree ... and 'White world'," while others described the functions of culture in community, for example "a group of people who are interacting based on a belief or purpose." One student described positions of culture and how, "Bouchard creates a community within the text as outsiders from the mainstream cultural world of which the readers of this book are most likely to be." Another clarified, "I think we need to create a community where all people are supported no matter what culture they live in." The discussion of cultural environment continued with another teacher stating the belief that "It is a teacher's moral responsibility to welcome all cultures into her classroom and to work to create a classroom atmosphere that the students can take ownership in." Ultimately one teacher epitomized deep understanding and awareness as she concluded, "A teacher's moral responsibility is to help the student achieve success in the classroom by valuing his culture and presenting other cultures with the same respect." These teachers' expressed the complexity of culture and community acknowledging inclusive and exclusive (Noddings, 2002) aspects and, importantly, their role in building community.

Individual and Community

Teachers also wrote about the individual's role in community particularly considering adjustments to membership of a community. The importance of the individual's feeling about membership in the community was addressed as in the previously shared example of how the author created community through the love and respect of the grandmother and grandson. To illustrate this theme, consider how one teacher commented, "In the story, *Nokum is My Teacher*, the author creates a community where there is compromise and mutual understanding." Another reflected, "I believe that being accepted is a large part of being in a community," while another acknowledged the importance of individual affect and challenges as one enters a new community such as the experience of the main character of the story stating, "He [the main character of the story] needs to feel safe and welcomed in the classroom." This sense of safety, one teachers offered, can be "easily achieved by asking him to share some of his experiences" and then "when the young man understands he is respected he will begin to respect others' cultures."

These teachers also envisioned their roles in supporting individual membership in community. For example, one shared, "The teacher is not only morally responsible for

teaching the young man or any young student, but morally obligated to do so. Morally, she should reach out to him, by getting to know him and showing respect for his culture. She should help him to understand that changes do occur and we are not always happy about them, but we all have to adjust. She must get to know him and his family to fully explain how much freedom he has in his adjustment." One teacher also recognized, "It is the teacher's responsibility to connect to each student where they are first and try to gain an understanding before trying to instruct. Our students need to know we care." Clearly, a community is made up of individuals and as the needs of the whole are addressed so must the needs of the individuals associated with a community, as the comments above reflect. What continues to be evident is how these teachers recognize their own "ethic of care" (Noddings, 2002) in supporting individual membership in community.

Purpose and Community

Why communities formed and existed was a third theme that emerged from the writings of these teachers. One teacher simply stated, "Community is a group of people working together" and another wrote, "My understanding of community in reference to the community created by the author is defined as the agreement as to goals." Additionally a teacher explained, "I use the word 'community' meaning a group of people who live close together and share common goals or ways of life," Another added "who share common interests or concerns." Several teachers pointed to the central purpose of learning as the focus of the school community and the importance of their role as teachers in facilitating this process. "I define community as the learners. It includes a teacher, who is also learning, and the student, who is asking questions and seeking answers." One teacher recognized that "Figuratively, there are common feelings that are felt when part of a group." These teachers noted the contextual nature of community as they described common purposes, the functions of community, specifically learning communities, that serve to create a sense of belonging.

Discussion

The cohort of practicing teachers selected as participants in this study are consistent with the report of Sleeter and Grant (2003) regarding race, class, and gender. As noted by Sleeter and Grant, a large majority of our nation's teachers are White females. Not only were all of the participating teachers White women, but there was little racial diversity in their classrooms. However, there was a range of socioeconomic diversity present in these settings. The "Whiteness" of these teachers and their limited cultural experiences were evident as they acknowledged the importance of honoring all cultures and respecting students' experiences in the classroom, yet they offered very little practical information regarding how to do so. One participant in the study recognized that, "Teachers take information from the curriculum

and add on their own unique approaches to teaching the content according to the age level and comprehension of students." While this teacher's response tended to epitomize the recognition and understanding of differing cultures, no real action was suggested. Recognition and awareness are merely starting points. How could awareness be expanded into instruction?

In general, these teachers' definitions and descriptions of community paralleled those of Heath (2004) as they confirmed the importance of community and defined it both conceptually and operationally. Similar to Heath, the teachers discussed community in terms of the interconnectedness of people, place, and purpose. One teacher commented that community was, "a group of people who live close together and share common goals or ways of life." Another said, "a community is a group of people who are interacting based on a belief or a purpose." Opportunities to expand cultural awareness must be part of the graduate experience through thoughtful processing of experience, reading, writing and discussing, in the approach suggested here through use of quality diverse children's literature. Teachers need to expand their understanding of community as the contextual complexity of culture, individual and group so as to create inclusive space for all learners. With deeper understanding of the diversity of community, teachers could broaden their curricular decision-making.

Initial writing by these teachers about curriculum and pedagogy did not include contextualizing learning with community. Yet once they experienced the well written and illustrated story of Bouchard's picture book they were able to deepen their thinking about community. Rosenblatt (1976) explains the literary power of children's books, stating "through the medium of words, the text brings into the reader's consciousness certain concepts, certain sensuous experiences, certain images of things, people, actions, scenes" (p. 30). Consistent with transactional views of reading (Rosenblatt's, 1976) the teachers were able to interact with story, express their views and dispositions and find ways to rethink their operational definitions of curriculum and pedagogy. They began to, particularly, consider their role in developing "awareness, understanding, respect and a valuing of differences in our society" (IRA, Standard 4).

However, this expanding awareness of community needs further development in order to meaningfully link instruction and instructional materials to students' backgrounds (IRA 4.2.3) and provide all students with "linguistic, academic, and cultural experience that links their community and school experiences" (IRA 4.3.1). Teachers need to develop a repertoire of approaches that reflect a deepened understanding of community and diversity — "how the heart and mind not only of the individual boy but of his whole community are involved in the education process" (Kohl, 1996, p. 123). That is to say teachers need to "assume pedagogical responsibility for attempting to understand the relationship and forces that influence students [within their community

which is] outside the immediate context of the classroom" (Giroux, 1988, p. 200) in order to make teaching and learning a thick educative experience for all students. In other words, the educative experience must "describe and probe the intentions, motives, meanings, context, situations, and circumstances of action" (Glesne, 2006, p. 27). Thus teachers and students approach "teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teaches. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 80). As teachers gain a greater understanding of students' lives outside of school, they are more able to create opportunities for classroom dialogue (Darder, 1991, p. 115). Community grounds teaching and learning because "community creates a sense that there is shared commitment and common good that binds [the teacher and learner and] one way to build community in the classroom is to recognize the value of each individual voice" (hooks, 1994, p. 40)

The use of children's literature is one medium for expanding community outside of one's own experiences, as the teachers in this study demonstrated. A well-written and illustrated picture book "conveys its messages through two media, the art of illustrating and the art of writing" (Huck, Hepler, Hickman & Kiefer, 1997, p. 198). As the classroom community of learners engages in thinking, writing, and talk about text that centers around diverse experiences they can begin to not only understand the varying themes, styles, and illustrations of text but also come to respect others' perspectives (Eeds & Wells, 1989). They can begin to sort through the complex issues of diverse experiences, reflect on their own hegemonic views and consider how to create opportunities for all students to learn in the classroom. They might, for example, consider what one teacher offered about the main character of Bouchard's story when she stated, "He feels like an outcast because he is different" and critically wonder from whose perspective is he "different" and if and how this is an issue of dominant culture perspective. Through open inquiry teachers could develop a critical stance on addressing issues that might move them to social justice activism action (IRA 4.3.4).

Implications

A very important implication of this study, then, is that teachers in today's classrooms, especially those who mirror this study's participants need to have a deep understanding of community. The implications of this understanding are critical in meeting the learning needs of our diverse population of students. As noted by Sleeter (2001), higher education institutions must prioritize this issue by recruiting a diverse pool of teacher candidates and also by developing the multicultural knowledge base of all teacher candidates. This knowledge base must also be included in the advanced degree programs for practicing teachers as they encounter ever-increasing diversity in

their classrooms. Moreover, in addition to this knowledge base, educators need a clear understanding of what the theory of multicultural education "looks like" in practice. This may be especially acute when teachers hail from predominantly White, rural areas.

The new <u>IRA Standards for Reading Professionals</u> offer the objectives to promote the understanding of community. As one teacher in this study noted about standards, "These set goals have been created in order to become a framework for all teachers to follow." The work of <u>Banks</u> (2004) and others who share his philosophy, is essential information to be included in professional development for teachers in order to reform schools so that students from diverse groups will experience educational equality. Teachers are the most important factor to ensure that our classrooms are communities of learners, places where all children are welcomed, valued, and have the opportunity to be successful.

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Reading about Peace, Talking about War: Becoming Aware in Community

BY: Laura L. Marasco

Patricia K. Dean

Keywords: community; developing community; issues education; in-service education; social change; peace; war; discourse; literature

ABSTRACT

This article has been crafted by both authors, so it seems awkward at times as to how to refer to us. Initially the 'we' will be both Dr. Marasco and Dr. Dean. As the class begins and we embark on our graduate course, the 'we' becomes all of us, Drs. Marasco and Dean and the graduate students, learning together as we move through the semester.

We are professors at Salisbury University, teaching in the Education Department. At the time the course transpired, we had offices directly across from each other and often conversed across the hall. We love our work and are always brainstorming new ideas together. Dr. Marasco's field is Social Studies (see White House Honors SU Faculty For Green Earth Book Awards Service and SU Celebrates 2010 Green Earth Book Awards) while Dr. Dean's is Literacy (see http://faculty.salisbury.edu/~pkdean/)

As we planned future graduate classes, we mused how our classes intertwined in so many ways. We both used literature in our classes, we both spent class time immersed in student-centered work and discussions, and each of us had strong interests in each other's fields. Through our conversations across the hall, the seeds to collaborate in planning our graduate classes together for the upcoming semester came to fruition. We are fortunate to work in an environment that promotes creativity and innovation in teaching and curriculum. As a result, we were able to create a framework for the class which focused on process rather than product. This article addresses some of the highlights of this endeavor.

The students in our graduate program are certified elementary/early childhood teachers earning their Masters of Education degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Salisbury University. In spring 2007 we offered our new course for the first time; the graduate students had the option to take Current Trends in Social Studies and Current Trends in Language Arts as a 6 credit class, combining the theoretical frameworks of

each into one holistic approach and practice. Nine graduate students liked the idea and enrolled. We all began a new journey in growth and learning.

Building Community

Together we, both graduate students and professors, moved through the semester, reading, sharing, discussing, debating and writing. As instructors, we chose to meet with our class off campus, alternating our own living rooms as classroom surrogates. All of us grew together, slowly at first and then much more deeply as the semester progressed. We watched movies and took field trips. We kept journals and created word lists. We paid attention to the world. As a result, we "watched" winter turn to spring, and "witnessed" the escalation of violence in the war with Iraq.

Our regular weekly sessions always began with the exercise, "I'm In." Each one of us took turns giving the rest of the group an update on our lives, connecting our stories to the curriculum. We soon lost the line between professor and student, and instead all took the role of learner and partner. Parker Palmer (1998), noted for his work on issues in education, community, spirituality and social change says this, "If we want to support each other's inner lives, we must remember a simple truth: the human soul does not want to be fixed, it wants simply to be seen and heard" (p. 151). As we began to trust and build community, the stories became more personal. We learned about certain events that triggered specific emotions. We came to understand viewpoint based on lived experiences. We learned to have opinions and voice them, even when they were not the popular point of view. We inspired each other to dig deep, read richly, and stand for something that matters to us. The caring and the acceptance of each other, by each other in this class eventually fostered a sense of belonging where it was safe to take risks and become vulnerable in community.

War

We began with the class meeting on a Saturday to participate in a workshop on Islam. There we learned background information, read excerpts from the Koran, and came to learn about a region and culture portrayed nightly on our news, but still a world away from us. Our talk turned to war.

At our next meeting we read *The Librarian of Basra* (Winter, 2005), and *Alia's Mission: Saving the Books of Iraq* (Stamaty, 2004). These readings prompted one student to write in her annotated bibliography (one requirement for the class) "I would use these books to show that the love of literature is universal throughout the world and to encourage respect and admiration for the Iraqi people during wartime." Of course, discussion is often tangential. One student drew our attention to Pat Mora's (1997) book, *Tomás and the Library Lady*. It prompted us to consider our definition of war, and

could that not include "The wars on Poverty, Immigrants and Terror?" Still another student suggested we look at *Shalom, Salaam, Peace* (Bogot, 1999). It is a picture book that is read from right to left, and its message is a call for peace not only in the Middle East but for everywhere. This conversation led us into a discussion about cultural ways of reading, writing and speaking.

There are many political and military similarities with the wars in Vietnam and Iraq. Although traditionally aged students of today were not yet born during the Vietnam era, many have fathers or grandfathers who served on the battlefield. For those students there is a connection. For older students and faculty there may even be a lived memory. Such was the case in our class. Two non-traditionally aged students had stories of an older brother and an uncle who had served, and one of the faculty was the widow of a Vietnam veteran. The book, *The Wall*, by Eve Bunting (1990) gave us an opportunity to, as one student put it in writing, "identify with [our] feelings of pride and loss. This book deals with the lasting impact of the Vietnam War. It's a good story...when children and grown-ups are thinking about war and its consequences."

Walls

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall led us into the theme of "walls." Our critical question was, "Are walls for keeping in or keeping out?" We spent several class sessions exploring *Talking Walls* by M.B. Knight (1992), and *Talking Walls*: *The Stories Continue* (1996). These books beautifully illustrate walls from many cultures and eras, past and present, and include such structures as The Vietnam Memorial Wall; Nelson Mandela's prison walls; the Inca walls of Peru; and the Peace Wall in Russia. We had an opportunity to research and discuss geography, history, politics and social justice issues surrounding these and other walls. Students researched writings about walls. Robert Frost's famous poem "Mending Wall" appeared on most everyone's research list, and their journals evidenced deep reflection as discussion continued regarding the original critical question.

Peace

For us, war and walls required that we also look for peace themes in children's and young adult literature. The literature of peace, or at least anti-war, seems to rise significantly when history is dealing with war, and we talked about journalism, biased news and bumper stickers.

One of the most powerful sessions we had was when we read *Faithful Elephants* by Tsuchiya (1951). The students, somewhat culturally brainwashed by Disney, expected the children's story to resolve the conflict happily, and several openly wept upon hearing the narrative's conclusion. The book is about three elephants in a Tokyo

zoo who are starved to death in an attempt to keep dangerous animals out of the city should the zoo be bombed by the enemy. It is a true story about what can happen in a community when a nation goes to war. The book is very controversial in many elementary school teachers' minds in part because death and war are topics we avoid in the classroom. It is interesting to note that in all the students' final bibliographies, not one student had this book listed. The only other book discussed in class but not noted in their assignments was, *Sadako and The Thousand Paper Cranes* (Coerr, 1977). Even after lengthy discussions about appropriate situations and ages of children where these books might be read or at least introduced and discussed, not one of our students chose to add it to their personal list of resource books.

The omission of these two books causes us now to ponder the reasons they were left out. We know from research that students may resist stories that they cannot connect with on a cultural or linguistic level (Desai, 1997), and Soter (1997) suggests that their unfamiliarity with cultural mores can make the content untenable for the reader. Were our students so removed from war that they could not put their minds and hearts around these books? Were they so unwilling to talk about death in their classrooms that they could not envision the use of children's literature that portrays such themes in order to promote peace? Were they, like many American teachers, trying to protect their own students from the world's sadness and pain?

Tsuchiya (1951) wrote the story "to let children know about the grief, fear, and sadness war produces. And that war affects not only human beings, but also innocent and lovely animals that don't know, understand, or even care about war. I hoped this book would implant some antiwar ideas into children's minds while I was praying for everyone to make his own effort for world peace" (Back Cover). Many students said that the first chore American children tend to have in families is the care of pets. The starving of the elephants went counter to their cultural understanding, and thus was seen as literature appropriate perhaps in other parts of the world, but not here in the States.

The Holocaust

The teaching and learning about the Holocaust was a different matter. Students were actively engaged in how, where, when and why a teacher would introduce and teach Holocaust Studies. Many had read Bunting's (1980) *Terrible Things: An Allegory of the Holocaust*; Rubin's (2000) *Fireflies in the Dark: The Story of Friedl-Dicker Brandeis and the Children of Terezin*; and Poole's (2005) *Anne Frank*. Many other books for children, e.g. *The Devil's Arithmetic* by Jane Yolen (1988); *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry (1989); and *The Upstairs Room* by Reiss (1972), offered by students in

the class, were examples of Holocaust literature they had used. It is interesting to note that these last three students suggested titles have "happy endings."

Our final Saturday trip was to the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C (see http://www.ushmm.org/). Only one of our students had been there previously. In preparation for the trip, the entire class read, *Night* (Wiesel, 1960). The fieldtrip proved powerful. The following week when we had our last meeting and debriefed on the experience, all of the students brought with them to class, items they had purchased from the museum book store. These books and posters reflected a new level of interaction with the Holocaust that we had not seen before. Hopefully these items along with the students' expanded understanding of this time in history and now personal experience will increase the chances of more authentic Holocaust curriculum in the classroom (see also http://www.ushmm.org/education/foreducators/).

One student wrote from *The Children We Remember* (Abells, 1983). "Through moving photographs from the Yad Vashem Archives in Jerusalem, Israel, archivist Chana Byers Abells has created an unforgettable essay about the children who lived and died during the Holocaust. And while it is a story of death and loss, it is also a story of courage and endurance. It is a story that must be told to all of today's children." (see http://www6.yadvashem.org/wps/portal/photo).

Endings and Beginnings

End of semester evaluations confirmed our best hopes for the class. Students rated the class as one of the best they had taken as graduate students because it caused them to think, reflect, and respond to and in the real world. One student wrote, "I forget it's a class. I can't wait to meet each week."

By fostering a safe, open environment where students (and faculty) can wonder and ponder attitudes, customs and behaviors from their own lives and those different from theirs, they can begin to feel comfortable in a world much larger than what they currently know. Understanding how to ask meaningful questions and pose problems related to current issues promoted active learning rather than the passive acceptance of prescribed knowledge put forth by those who have not experienced critical thinking themselves. Freire (1970), Giroux (1988, 1997) and Darder (1995) remind us, as teachers, of this important preparation in teaching. Critical thinking needs to be infused into our curriculum as a way to see the world and respond with our lives.

As we delve more deeply into what Palmer (2000, p. 12) calls our birthright gifts, we not only find out who we are, but we find relationship with others and pathways to serving the needs of the world and our children. Our students' comments continue to

encourage us to be reflective of our own practice, to acknowledge and honor the importance of teacher-student relationships, and to stand strong in the world.

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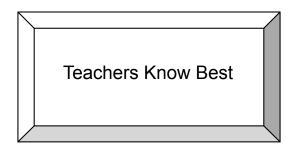


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Special note If you didn't follow the link previously, please check out these two amazing educators at White House Honors SU Faculty For Green Earth Book Awards Service



BY: Akimi Sujishi-Watson Cynthia McDermott

Keywords: conditions for teaching and learning; mandates; formulaic practice; prescriptive practice; developing community; issues education

ABSTRACT

The goal of this essay is to present a mini-case study that reports the current instructional process for Reading/Language Arts in the Los Angeles, California Unified School District and suggests several resources and strategies for choosing alternative paths.

Conditions for teaching and learning can rarely be perfect, but that doesn't matter if the considerations critical for learning can be addressed by a teacher on the spot, not left to a remote "expert," curriculum designer, or legislator (Smith, 2003, p 30).

Literacy Reform

Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD, 2003) has 727,319 enrolled students of which 73.2% are Hispanic/Latino, 11.4% are Black, 6% are Asian and 8% are white. Of all students only 27% scored at or above the 50th percentile in reading and the 39th percentile in mathematics.

In the summer of 1996, the reading/language arts teacher specialists on the California Department of Education Instructional Resource Evaluation Panel recommended that the instructional reading program known as Open Court (OCR) NOT be included in the State adoption list. In December of the same year the California Board of Education overruled the Panel and added OCR to the State's textbook adoption list. This decision has had wide-ranging, negative effects particularly on the least performing schools.

By October 1999, LAUSD Board of Education passed a resolution requiring all elementary schools to use OCR in grades K-5. The district expects "fidelity" to the program in order to raise test scores, particularly for students for whom English is not a first language. Generally accepted learning research recognizes that children learn differently and that providing access to the curriculum in different ways is critical. OCR instruction in most of the elementary schools does not provide for difference as it is

delivered entirely through whole group and paced instruction. And despite the goal of the district to have program "fidelity," delivery of the curriculum varies significantly from school to school and from classroom to classroom. This is not surprising since teachers often believe that they should have autonomy in knowing what to teach, when to teach it and how.

This case study reports the use of OCR in a high performing school with an API of 10, where the primary language arts instruction is the OCR. As stated earlier in this piece, it is expected that charter schools have flexibility in how they structure academic programs. Currently the "flexibility" happens with implementation of the OCR program. Charter teachers are not required to be on a specific page or in a specific section of the program based on the time of day or day of the week. However, they are required to cover the entire unit by the same end date as the rest of the LAUSD. Charter teachers are also required to give the state mandated standardized unit tests and input unit test scores for the district's use by a specific date.

One teacher's Experience with Open Court

What follows is the experience of one teacher at a LAUSD Charter School. Use of a different font symbolizes her voice within this manuscript.

Our Charter School is considered successful and serves grades K-5. In 1993, it was granted one of the initial 100 charters in California under the Charter Schools Act of 1992. Our charter has many programs that involve students in school-wide, cross grade-level and cross-subject activities. In the 2008-2009 school year there were 341 students attending our Charter, 11.7% Asian, 0.9% Filipino, 0.6% Pacific Islander, 5.8% African American, 9.3% Hispanic and 71.7% White. Charter schools are public schools that have a lot of flexibility in the way they structure academic programs, how they hire, and other functions. They are bound mainly by pupil outcomes, i.e. test scores, set forth in their charter petition; if they don't meet these goals, their charter can be withdrawn.

Many years ago I became interested in children's thinking and its relationship to literacy. This interest is built upon years of study in cognitive developmental psychology and progressive educational philosophy. When I began teaching, I naturally planned to adopt a constructivist approach. As I entered my career as a teacher, the entire district where I was employed adopted a proscribed language arts curriculum with an emphasis on standardized tests to assess student achievement. Nevertheless, I was determined to incorporate aspects of a cognitively based constructivist approach in my teaching.

As I explored techniques for promoting critical thought within the primarily scripted OCR, I decided it was important for me to attend several district trainings about OCR and to work closely with my OCR coach. The coaches leading my district training sessions provided overhead after overhead of statistical data as proof that OCR's system of instruction was sound.

Some of the studies included authors I have read and it seemed to me that I had interpreted the information differently. The trainings provided teachers with opportunities to explore the teacher's manual. There were valuable ideas in each color coded section of OCR, and the teachers in the workshop shared many valuable strategies for working with the scripted program, too. I couldn't help but think that the strategies seemed to emphasize the program and not the child. During the training, I noticed a repeated theme expressed by the educators in the room. Many of the participants described situations where the time spent on lessons were great and in many instances because of the pacing/testing situation they all felt the pressure to move on. Participants were told to use the forty minutes part of Independent Workshop Time (IWT) to go back to concepts that students were not grasping. Teachers were instructed to reference specific workbooks for re-teaching skills that they had already taught and for intervention with second language learners. At the end of these week long trainings, I knew a lot about implementing the program, but my concerns about children constructing their learning were still not addressed.

Rather than get frustrated, my thought was perhaps this is where the OCR literacy coach came in. In most instances coaches are provided by the district to support classroom teachers in developing their literacy program and in the case of my school she also did the work of inputting all scores for each unit test. Coaches have varying degrees of experience. I had the opportunity to work with two OCR coaches at two different points in my career. The first OCR coach was a classroom teacher who had recently become a coach. She had never used Open Court curriculum in the classroom. In fact, as a new teacher, I had more experience with the new program through my second student teaching assignment. Although she was very kind and positive, she was unable to provide any useful ideas. Not only was she working with a new program but she was also working with a group of teachers who did not appreciate the change in their program. The charter has a group of teachers who are incredibly hard working and creative. The second coach arrived at my school with only three years teaching experience and with very little to offer the veteran teachers of my school. Needless to say, neither coach could provide specific answers to similar questions about time and student needs raised both at my site and in the trainings. Once again, I was told the remedy for working with students below basic or intensive should happen during IWT. It was recommended that we use the workbook curriculum provided by the program (I have seven work books that provide blackline masters and seven annotated teachers workbooks).

As I reflect on these early experiences of teaching OCR, I remembered a conversation I once had with a person who worked in the research department of Los Angeles Unified School District who told me the problem with OCR is not the program, but rather the teacher implementation. This person believed if teachers would implement the program exactly as proscribed in the manuals, using the exact script in the margins of the teacher manual, students would be successful. After years of teaching the program, I am frustrated. I have come to realize that implementing each aspect of the program in the time frames recommended is

unrealistic even in a high performing school. OCR provides scripted lessons and a variety of tools to assist in language arts instruction. Most of the curriculum is designed for whole group instruction. There are very specific guidelines for the structure of each lesson. The district has clear expectations about the amount of time language arts instruction should take place and each color coded section in OCR has been given loose time frames and most lessons take longer than the loose time frame. The skills taught for each unit are very specific For example, the first six weeks of my instruction included reading five stories that relate to the theme, "Sharing Stories," teaching students the skills for writing personal narratives, and covering skills that required students to be able to distinguish common nouns vs. proper noun, verbs, and pronouns. The OCR way of guiding instruction in these areas include very specific workbook pages and structured lessons. The standardized unit tests are to be administered in a specific time frame, which makes it at a minimum, difficult and in some instances impossible for the teacher to provide process-oriented instruction (Moustafa and Land, 2002).

I find it frustrating that "independent" workshop time is expected to provide opportunities to fix all program flaws. IWT in its ideal form is a time when students work on their own to practice skills and/or hopefully pursue inquiries while the teacher works with students who need support. Investigation projects are generally related to a question that students have about the theme. During an investigation students are able to research the answer to their question and put together a project that reports their findings. In theory, independent workshop time is the one area I can implement my constructivist practices. I try to resist the temptation to give my students a list of tasks from workbooks to prepare them for the unit test. Instead, I provide students with opportunities to explore and construct learning. My students are encouraged to explore a variety of texts, search the internet, and conduct interviews about the topics that interest them. The stumbling block to any kind of successful investigation project is OCR's emphasis on whole group instruction and learning through workbooks. Those activities, in my opinion, do not develop the skills necessary to work independently. Working independently requires opportunities to develop critical thinking and participation in the learning process. Students need to snap out of whole group mode and be seekers of knowledge. The time necessary to explore these investigations does not naturally conclude at a district determined date. My students often work after the unit is over. The wealth of knowledge and wonderful investigation projects are not reflected on the standardized test score. I make the choice to continue using these practices because of their value to my students.

The list of skills a teacher is required to complete in the prescribed weekly plan can and often does take far more time than the actual mandated language arts instructional time. In these instances what is easiest to give up? My guess is the independent part of the workshop time or other areas of the curriculum. In 2004 United Teachers of Los Angeles formed a task force that conducted a survey of teachers in the field on the subject of mandated curriculum. Most teachers reported that 1/3 to ½ of their instructional day was given over to using mandated programs. A

typical negative response made by 211 teachers was "Creativity and personal methods in trying to meet the needs of students can not be utilized" and "I have little time to address all the other curricular areas." I am seeing evidence of this as an instructor for a teacher credentialing program too. Students who participate in the Social Science and Children's Learning Course that I teach are reporting that they have little or no opportunity to participate in social studies instruction because of the time dedicated to language arts and math instruction.

Smith's (2003) quote spoke of "a remote 'expert,' curriculum designer, or legislator." Recently members of my school community began examining the OCR program and the district mandated unit tests. Whenever the experienced talented teachers of my school question the rationale behind this mandated program, I marveled at how many times I heard the word "they." The principal and district administrators would say things like, "They want it done this way" or "they have proven if a child scores eight correct on the unit test the child will score well on the state test at the end of the year." I found myself using the word "they" when referencing the program to other teachers and parents. Eventually, I found myself wondering, who is "they"? In effort to understand the elements of the OCR program, our administrator and school community representatives met with our school districts literacy department experts. These experts were in charge of the local district language arts program implementation and were coordinators for professional development for both OCR expert teachers and classroom teacher. Our objective for the meeting was to understand the rationale behind the pacing of program implementation and to determine how the mandated assessments related to OCR and California content standards.

Ultimately, the teachers who attended the meeting shared their frustrations with various instructional activities found in student workbooks from the OCR series and the assessment strategies used in OCR state mandated unit test booklets. Teachers were especially frustrated with the student instructions for the writing prompts found in the unit test booklets. I was shocked to hear the literacy experts agree that the writing component found in many of the grades unit tests were not well-written and were not aligned with state standards. I would even describe the experts as sharing our frustrations about the tests. This led me to discover that the district had a "they" too. "They" is the state agency who constructs the unit assessments. "They" are making decisions about what we teach and how we teach with no connection to our children. This is not what I think reform is about.

The Irony of Soviet Reform

It is ironic that as the United States rapidly moves toward Race to the Top, National Standards and increasing top down fact based instruction and pedagogy, reform toward a progressive, student-based effort is underway throughout the former USSR. For fifty years or more, thousands and thousands of students throughout the former USSR experienced Soviet style education which had as its underlying philosophy that the teacher's job was to transmit standardized materials to the students,

and the student's job was to memorize those materials, all of which were put in the context of socialist ethics. Everything was part of a mandated curriculum and pedagogy and stressed an ethic of the collective over the interests of the individual and therefore, for both teachers and students, creativity and individualism were discouraged (see http://countrystudies.us/russia/52.htm.) This perspective began to transform beginning in 1991 with the collapse of the USSR. We in the US have much to learn about what a Soviet style education can mean for a society (Bracey, 2004).

Throughout the former USSR region many projects were established to support such a change but perhaps most noteworthy for this article was the work of the Open Society Institute (OSI) of George Soros designed to promote more open societies. In 1997, a collective project, the Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking Project (RWCT), was established between the International Reading Association and OSI. It offered an integrated program of staff development, activities for teachers of the primary grades through high schools, and educators from teacher-training centers, school inspectorates, and national ministries. RWCT focused on methods of teaching, rather than any particular curriculum. In each country joining the RWCT network, four volunteers from the IRA were assigned to work in country and more than twenty countries participated in this project. The IRA volunteers presented democratic practices intended to play an important role in the transition to a critical thinking society. Such skills as thinking reflectively, taking ownership for personal learning, understanding the logic of arguments, working cooperatively, listening attentively, debating confidently and becoming independent life long learners were the goals and practices that RWCT demonstrated.

The curriculum for RWCT was conceptually based on a Deweyian perspective that argues that school should be about encouraging active citizenry. Learning opportunities that are interdisciplinary, connected to the community and which require critical thinking and action, are examples of excellent schooling. The work of the Coalition for Essential Schools, Foxfire, and Rethinking Schools to name a few, argue that students, teachers and parents must be actively involved with the public education process. Since the public is the stakeholder for the strength and capacity of the society we must act to vigorously engage everyone in the necessary discussion with those in power who are making curriculum decisions. There have been minor victories in the country around standardized testing and more needs to be done. Educators need to understand their role in making students aware of the issues generated by the one size fits all teaching philosophy. Students and their parents must demand schools that offer more than a dumbed down curriculum. And of course we must ask why educators in the classroom and school officials are allowing remote experts, curriculum designers, or

legislator to dictate a cookie cutter education for our students. Teachers should be the ones who define the ultimate purpose for public education.

Raising a Ruckus

The collective perspective of the "they" who are controlling the curriculum and pedagogy is clear: a child will grow as long as they are measured. We know that assertion is both faulty and mistaken. As professionals we need to educate ourselves and our parents and children to a better educational future. As long as we are content to put up with strategies and materials that we know are unhelpful, or worse, for our children, then there can be no successful school reform. However, the increasing intrusion into our work as teachers from outside "experts" prevents the most creative and critical kinds of work from being done. All of our students suffer as a result of the increasing commitment to standardization and teacher proofing of not only the curriculum but also the pedagogy. It is time to be like Max in *Where the Wild Things Are* and raise a ruckus. Here are some ways to do that. What can you do?

Here are some suggestions.....

- 1. Resist using materials that you know are not helping students be successful.
- 2. If you see it is not working, say it. Tell your friends and family, parents and administrators. You are the expert and they need to know.
- 3. Join a union and ask them to study what is being taught and what is being learned.
- 4. Join an organization (there is a list at the end of the article) or start your own.
- 5. Read Susan Ohanian for inspiration. (see www.susanohanian.org)
- 6. Stay educated. Go to school board meetings and contact your representatives.
- 7. Stay in tune with the decisions of your state education office.
 - 8. Write to Dr. Arne Duncan and tell him what we need. Send a copy to President Obama.

As Dwight Eisenhower has said, "Here in America we are descended in spirit from revolutionaries and rebels---men and women who dare to dissent from accepted doctrine" (from a speech delivered at Columbia in 1954). We need to remember that our silence only allows the status quo to continue and provide inferior educational experiences for our children. As their advocates we must keep acting on their behalf. Good luck to us one and all!

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Helpful Resources

- www.fairtest.org The National Center for Fair & Open Testing (FairTest) works to end the misuses and flaws of standardized testing and to ensure that evaluation of students, teachers and schools is fair, open, valid and educationally beneficial.
- www.rethinking.org Founded in 1986 by activist teachers, Rethinking Schools is a nonprofit, independent publisher of educational materials. We advocate the reform of elementary and secondary education, with a strong emphasis on issues of equity and social justice.
- www.essentialschools.org The Coalition of Essential Schools (CES) is at the forefront of creating and sustaining personalized, equitable, and intellectually challenging schools. Essential schools are places of powerful learning where all students have the chance to reach their fullest potential.
- www.foxfire.org "Foxfire" is a method of classroom instruction—not a step-by-step checklist, but an over-arching approach that incorporates the original Foxfire classroom's building blocks of giving students the opportunity to make decisions about how they learn required material, using the community around them as a resource to aid that learning, and giving the students an audience for their work beyond the classroom.
- www.forumforeducation.org The Forum for Education and Democracy is a national education "action tank" committed to the public, democratic role of public education the preparation of engaged and thoughtful democratic citizens.
- www.edchange.org EdChange is a team of passionate, experienced, established, educators dedicated to equity, diversity, multiculturalism, and social justice. With this shared vision, we have joined to collaborate in order to develop

- resources, workshops, and projects that contribute to progressive change; change in ourselves, our schools, and our society.
- www.t4sj.org Teachers 4 Social Justice is a grassroots non-profit teacher support and development organization. Our mission is to provide opportunities for self-transformation, leadership, and community building to educators in order to affect meaningful change in the classroom, school, community and society.
- www.tolerance.org Founded in 1991 by the Southern Poverty Law Center, Teaching Tolerance is dedicated to reducing prejudice, improving intergroup relations and supporting equitable school experiences for our nation's children.
- www.rougeforum.org The Rouge Forum is a group of educators, students, and parents seeking a democratic society.
- www.susanohanian.org Susan Ohanian is a social critic with a web site updated daily on the status of education in the U.S.

Authors' Bio:



Akimi Sujishi-Watson is an educator with experience teaching general education in both primary and upper elementary school as well as experience as an adjunct faculty member of Antioch University's Master of Arts in Education Program. She enjoys learning about strategies for student centered curriculums and strives to share the benefits of this type of instruction with colleagues and community partners. She lives and teaches in Los Angeles County, California. She hopes to help students feel empowered through the learning process.



McDermott is the chair of the education Department at Antioch University-Los Angeles and has taught K-12 and is currently teaching teachers. Her interests include democratic and civic education and the impact of recent neuroscience research on learning. She will be teaching at the University of Sarajevo as a Fulbright scholar in 2011.

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Children's Literature Corner

Using Multicultural Alphabet Books to Broaden Children's Global Perspective Andrea Karlin

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In his book, *Deaf Culture A To Z*, author, Walter Paul Kelly (2003) dedicates his book for all children to enjoy and learn about Deaf Culture. He states,

In this book, you will the word "Deaf" (with a capital D). People belonging to the Deaf community prefer to use this spelling. Deaf people identify closely with each other. They share a sense of Deaf pride, traditions, values, lifestyles, humor, folklore, art, theater, as well as a rich common language—American Sign Language. The purpose of this book is to teach all about the culture Deaf people cherish. (Book Dedication Page).

At Lamar University, where I teach in the Department of Professional Pedagogy. the Deaf Education program is one of the largest in the country. We often have undergraduate and graduate students in our classes—along with their interpreters. I know that I have learned at least as much from these students as they have learned from me. I thought that I knew a lot about the Deaf culture until a few years ago when I served on a committee that invited the speaker for the annual distinguished lecturer series lecture at the university. Originally, we had booked Henry Winkler. He had up to 30 days before the lecture to pull out. We were down to day 33 when we received a call from his people telling us that he would not be able to come after all but that he had spoken with Marlee Matlin, the Academy award winning actress and his good friend, who said she would be pleased to take his place. I considered this a blessing in disguise. With our large Deaf Education student population, this would be an even better choice than Henry Winkler, who was supposed to talk about growing up with a reading disability. I phoned the Deaf Education department and told the secretary my good news-- that Marlee Matlin would be coming for the lecture. I was met with dead silence on the line. Oh well, I thought. I then phoned a good friend who is a professor in the department to tell her my good news and is a hearing person. She broke the news to me that many of the people in the Deaf community did not like Marlee Matlin because she speaks and when she gave her short acceptance speech at the Academy Awards over 20 years ago, she spoke without an interpreter. Many perceive her as a sell-out. And, we had better be prepared for some angry and vocal Deaf attendees. I

was speechless. The very group that I thought would be thrilled might be hostile. Now what should we do?

Marlee Matlin arrived with her interpreter on the day of the lecture. Because she seemed so friendly and open, we decided to tell her that we did have a large Deaf community and some might be very vocal. She had previous experience with their anger and defused the situation by explaining in her talk why she chose to use speech instead of sign. By the end of her lecture, she had won over those in the audience, especially members from the Deaf culture. Many stayed to have her autograph her book and to have their pictures taken with her. The evening was a great success.

What this experience taught me and the others not part of the Deaf community, is that we didn't know as much as we think we knew about cultures other than our own. Books like Walter Paul Kelley's help to bridge that gap. Books like Kelly's, give readers as opportunity to be introduced to aspects of a culture that they might not have even thought to ask about.

Alphabet books, because of their very nature—being written in alphabetical order, are concise and easy to use, may differ in the depth in which they go into a particular topic but they certainly give us insight that we might otherwise not have. They also give us opportunities for further study. Alphabet books that are listed in the following bibliography, vary in their depth and are only an example of the many books available. As with all genres of literature, all are not equal in their quality with regard to information and illustration. Criteria used for judging other types of multicultural books can and should be applied.

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*denotes books that are not written as alphabet books (a, b, c, etc).

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Book Reviews

A review by Debra Mayes Pane.....

Critical Literacy: Context, Research, and Practice in the K-12 Classroom (2007) Lisa Patel Stevens & Thomas W. Bean, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (133 pages, \$32.95 (paperback).

Critical Literacy: Context, Research, and Practice in the K-12 Classroom is a practical book dealing with a misunderstood and underused resource in our schools today—critical literacy. Although written primarily for teachers, this book would be informative and useful for teacher educators, researchers, novices, experts, and even naysayers of critical literacy. The authors define key terms in the *Preface* to help readers become insiders to critical literacy jargon, often a deterrent to using critical literacy. Throughout the book, they provide hands-on, understandable theoretical tools for implementing critical literacy in K-12 classrooms "through real classrooms examples, vignettes, and conversations among teachers and teacher educators" (back cover).

The authors pull from their own experiences and "futuristic thinking about education in a global geopolitical context" (p. xii) that will require citizens discerning of how they are being positioned by media, Internet, and traditional texts. They encourage teachers to integrate critical literacy practices and repertoires into traditional curricula at a pace that works for them and their students. This book is pertinent in the current high-stakes testing climate that clings to a "nostalgic view of literacy based on traditional texts" (p. xii) and curricula that is too narrow for developing informed citizens.

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The book is organized into nine chapters and three sections. Chapters 1-3 cover critical literacy theory; chapters 4-7, critical literacy at the classroom level; and chapters 8-9, critical policy analysis and policy's impact on classroom practice. Special features help readers "journey into the seemingly complex world of critical literacy" (p. xvii), including text boxes, figures, scenarios, teaching strategies, discussion questions, key terms, recommended readings, and references in each chapter. An index, glossary, and author page are also included.

Chapter 1, "Redefining Literacy," traces historical traditions in literacy pedagogy that inform the "current heightened need for critical literacy" (p. xvi) in a text-saturated world. The authors differentiate between critical reading (distinguishing fact from opinion) and the more complex notion of critical literacy (deconstructing hidden messages or underlying agendas in any text). The classroom scenario illustrates a fifthgrade teacher building critical literacy into comprehension activities, helping students assume a critical stance toward their science textbook by "questioning the voices behind texts, who is represented and who is not, and what positions texts are assuming" (p. 6).

Chapter 2, "Why We Need Critical Literacy: Dynamic Texts and Identity Formation," situates the increasing need for critical literacy within contemporary identity theories and the "proliferation of texts available on the Internet and other multimedia" (p. 15). The authors differentiate between inferential reading, or higher-order thinking skills, and critical literacy demands to read texts and filter them for "positionalities, agendas, and purposes" (p. 17). Two vignettes illustrate how texts in the current information age and knowledge-based economy work, demand attention, require interaction, and shape readers' identities depending on the sociocultural context. A reflective text box helps teachers assess whether they are engaging in critical literacy by preparing students to deconstruct, critique, and thoughtfully examine all texts for personal fulfillment, agency, and social justice purposes.

Chapter 3, "Critical Literacy and Teacher Education," considers the impact of dominant versus critical approaches to schooling on teacher identities in light of the current climate of distrust, lack of teacher agency, and limits to students' literacy development. The mismatch between scientifically-based curricula and global cyberspace discussion forums is fleshed out from a critical perspective. Critical questions to assess curriculum or policy are presented, including whose interests are being served, who is not represented, are students active or passive, what are the historical origins, and what political stances are served or ignored? A conversational scenario illustrates how teacher education impacts teachers' ability to critique texts

around them. The Resident Critic strategy exemplifies how to engage students in thoughtful examination of popular culture.

Chapter 4, "Critical Literacy as the Nexus of Praxis," explores critical literacy as the practice of freedom, or critical reflexive praxis. The authors delve into the social justice mindset needed to constantly, cyclically question the "theoretical basis, practical implementation, and overall impact of literacy practices" (p. 62) for particular readers in particular contexts and in what ways. They discuss how dominant notions of best practices, replicable strategies, time constraints, and "prepackaged materials that overemphasize particular methods over reflective practice" (p. 63) are problematic in critical reflexive praxis. *Stance*, *context*, *tools*, and *process*, four features of successful critical literacy practices to promote critical questioning of power and texts, and cautions about engaging in critical literacy in the classroom are also addressed.

Chapter 5, "Praxis Point 1: Popular Culture, Fandom, and Boundaries," explores a critical media literacy and social studies unit conducted in an 8th- grade classroom. The scenario helps illustrate the "delicate balance involved in including students' out-of-school popular culture interests while respecting their space to engage in divergent texts" (p. xvi). The authors reflect on the need to use a critical stance beyond media texts only; include students' text choices within the context of the curriculum; model metalanguage tools (i.e., jargon) for critical questioning; and use both processes of deconstruction and reconstruction to increase students' agency.

Chapter 6, "Praxis Point 2: Critical Numeracy Across the Curriculum," provides a 2nd-grade classroom scenario of project-based learning and critical literacy in which students critically deconstruct and reconstruct Internet pop-up ads. The authors reflect on tensions that arise "when new practices and perspectives, especially critical literacy, are brought into the classroom [and] students are asked to . . . struggle between studenting (performing to the task) and learning (engaging in more authentic tasks)" (p. 82). Guidelines for teachers to develop similar projects in their own classrooms is included.

Chapter 7, "Praxis Point 3: Cycles of Deconstruction and Reconstruction," illustrates the role of critical literacy in an inquiry project for rural high school students, treating their "community history as a text [to] engage with . . . critically, asking and exploring topics of benefit, advantage, marginalization, and costs" (p. 87). The authors reflect on critical literacy praxis of the teacher and the reconstruction and empowerment that occurred as students engaged in "research, interviewing, and production of their own documentary" (p. 89). Authors encourage teachers to undertake similar critical literacy projects with their own students.

Chapter 8, "Critical Literacy and Educational Policy Texts," provides a critical policy analysis of Reading First, the federal policy regarding reading, using critical discourse analysis of conversations and texts from a federally sponsored meeting to launch the initiative. Discussion of what was present and what was missing in the analysis reveals that the Reading First federal funding opportunity yielded a limited view of literacy, all-encompassing role of the state and administration, and narrow roles for teachers and students. Implications of viability and interpretations are addressed.

Chapter 9, "Critical Policy Analysis in Local Contexts," pursues a more dynamic definition of policy as a "crystallization of values" (p. 111) at the district, school, and classroom level. The authors examine how one school interprets and interacts with the Reading First policy by exploring the influence, presence, and surveillance of government on various teachers' responses to educational policy. They recommend educational policies that integrate cycles of discussion, interrogation, and transformation by administrators, teachers, and students who are affected most by the policies.

As an empowering, critical literacy education advocate, I believe that the authors intertwined foundations in critical literacy theory and critical reflexive praxis commendably (Friere, 2000; Giroux, 1988). They also addressed recommended critical questions and features of successful critical literacy practices successfully. Only chapter 3 was problematic in how the illustrations and suggestions for disrupting education discourses with critical literacy stopped short of empowering teachers and teacher educators to develop reconstructions that included (absent) curriculum specialists, principals, or policymakers. These omissions left this reader "feeling nihilistic and at a loss of agency" (Stevens & Bean, 2007, p. 66) for the teachers and teacher educators in this chapter who were distanced from the all-encompassing role of the state and, thus, further isolated in their practice. Perhaps this oversight results from implicit implications of power that continue to pervade teacher education research and practice.

Nonetheless, this book is well worth reading for anyone interested in both learning about and promoting critical literacy development that reflects social justice and responsibility among all learners. It is one of the few books I have found that clearly explores, presents, and encourages teachers to integrate critical literacy theory and critical reflexive praxis in their own classrooms. I recommend this book as a primer and reference for keeping abreast of the current research and perspectives related to critical literacy in K-12 classrooms (e.g., Rozansky & Asgeson, 2010; Soares & Wood, 2010).

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A review by Brittany Wiegand.....

Kinloch, V. (2009). *Harlem on our minds: Place, race and the literacies of urban youth.* New York, New York: Teachers College Press. (224 pages, \$25.95).

Valerie Kinloch's book, *Harlem on Our Minds*, challenges educators to push themselves to re-conceptualize literacy and use multiple literacies in the classroom to make greater connections between students' "parallel universes" (youth literary experiences in schools and their surrounding community). Although her context for writing is Harlem, NYC, the issues from and around gentrification are relevant to many cities across the United States, including Baton Rouge, where I currently teach and live. The many questions the book raises include: What are the implications of gentrification? Who is implicated? How does this affect our conceptualization of community? What can we actually do, from elementary school to high school, in order to combat negative aspects of gentrification?

Gentrification not only removes people from their neighborhoods, communities, and histories, it perpetuates inequality in the community in which it occurs. Besides physically removing community members from their homes, it also calls into question both individual and collective identities of the gentrificators and the gentrified. Who or what are to blame? On page 105, Kinloch states, "The blame partially results from the inability of people with different racial, cultural, and economic backgrounds to talk about community histories, demographics, and change." This is important because of the implications it has for all of us. If there is no space in which to talk about changes to our communities, we continue a cycle of gentrification that could drastically change a community's culture.

In Chapter 3, "Dancing to Different Beats" Kinloch discusses the youth surveys from two different groups: Harlem High School and the Junior Scholars Program. The responses from these surveys show students' desire to be included in decision-making processes involving the gentrification of their community. Kinloch discusses one of the students, Khaleeq, and says,

"he believed that no one's really 'listening to us, asking our opinions.' Instead, everyone is just dancing around, or moving through, the world in ways that ignore the collective struggles and pains of people who have been and continue to be historically marginalized because of race, language, and cultural identities" (p. 64).

We have a chance to change this "dancing" into meaningful engagement both within and outside of the classroom. Although Kinloch's project involved high school students, her work extends beyond the boundaries of the high-school setting. When students are engaged with critical examinations of community issues at the elementary level, we begin to create young citizens prepared to get their voice heard in the world. This book is essential for educators of all levels interested in promoting critical reading, writing, and questioning.

As teachers, we have a huge opportunity to engage students in these issues from an early age. By encouraging critical thinking and building a connection between home and school (connecting the "parallel universes") we can make a positive impact on the future.

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Check these out!!!

www.agreenplan.com www.polartrec.com www.partofsomethingbig.com www.terracycle.net www.thestoryofstuff.com www.curbyourcarbonmarin.com www.stopglobalwarming.com

Literacy and Social Responsibility, an electronic journal of the Literacy and Social Responsibility SIG of the IRA Submission Requirements

Independent, peer-reviewed ejournal providing an international forum for educators, authors, and researchers at all levels presenting practices promoting literacy development that reflects social responsibility among all learners. Manuscript focus should highlight quality programs advocating community engagement, service-learning, informed and participatory citizenship, social responsibility, activism, and stewardship reflecting an appreciation for all forms of diversity. As an electronic journal, interactive submissions with active links are particularly sought.

Full-length manuscripts should not exceed 4,000 words including all references, figures and appendices (approximately 15 pages). Submissions should be blinded 1) remove author names and affiliations from bylines, 2) replace references to your own and to coauthors' published work simply with "Author (year)" in text and in reference list [delete all publication titles], 3) mask any city, state, institutional affiliation, or links to personal websites. All submissions should conform to the style outlined in the sixth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. Text should be presented double-spaced in 12 point font, preferably in Microsoft Word; images should be submitted in jpg format. Authors of accepted manuscripts must also provide written permission releases for use of material from another source (including student's writing samples, text or figures excerpted from another published work, etc.). Releases must also be provided for use of any person's words, likeness or images.

Book reviews of professional literature and children's literature are typically 1,500 words and can focus on a single text or multiple, related texts. Reviews of children's literature should suggest themes relating literacy instruction to community engagement, service-learning, informed and participatory citizenship, social responsibility, activism, and stewardship, reflecting an appreciation for all forms of diversity.

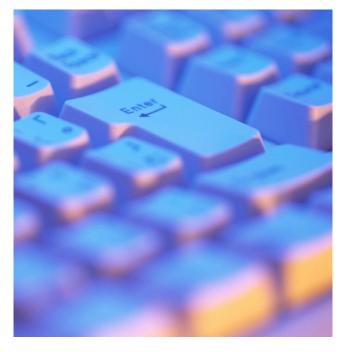
Relevant poetry submissions will be considered.

Submit electronically, attaching file to:
Margaret-Mary Sulentic Dowell @ sdowell@lsu.edu



For more information about Literacy and Social Responsibility SIG of IRA, visit our website @ http://www.csulb.edu/misc/l-sr/

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS



CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Literacy and Social Responsibility, a special interest group of the International Reading Association, is accepting submissions for their electronic journal, *Literacy and Social Responsibility*.

This independent, peer-reviewed ejournal provides an open forum presenting practices promoting literacy development that reflects social responsibility among all learners. Editor seeks manuscripts highlighting quality programs advocating community engagement, service-learning, informed and participatory citizenship, social responsibility, activism, and stewardship reflecting an appreciation for diversity. Book reviews of professional literature and children's literature and relevant poetry submissions will also be considered.

Deadline for next issue is March 15, 2011; publication August 2011.

Submit electronically, attaching Word file to:

Margaret-Mary Sulentic Dowell @ sdowell@lsu.edu

For more information about Literacy and Social Responsibility SIG of IRA, visit our website @ http://www.csulb.edu/misc/l-sr/

The Literacy and Social Responsibility Special Interest Group Announces the:

Literacy and Service Recognition Award

CELEBRATE THE WORK OF OUR YOUTH ACTIVELY SERVING THEIR COMMUNITIES. NOMINATE YOUR STUDENTS!!

<u>WHAT IS IT?</u> Given annually, this award will honor students for exemplary service that addresses the purpose of the Literacy and Social Responsibility Special Interest Group (L-SR SIG) of the International Reading Association (IRA). A presentation will be made at the L-SR SIG session of the IRA annual convention announcing and featuring the award winners.

<u>L-SR SIG Purpose</u>: To study, understand, and promote high-quality programs which foster community service, participatory citizenship, social responsibility, appreciation for diversity, environmental stewardship, and caring behavior that occurs within the development of literacy across the curriculum.

Service projects might relate to: Literacy & Respecting Diverse Cultures

Classroom Communities of Inquiry Literacy and Character Education & Service Learning Community-Based Writing Fostering Social, Emotional, & Academic Growth

Language Arts & the Natural World Literacy & Civic/Social/Environmental Engagement

HOW DO I APPLY FOR IT? Guidelines for submission for the Literacy and Service Recognition Award can be found at our website: http://www.csulb.edu/misc/l-sr/
You will be asked to submit contact and program information, including an essay that describes the program and particularly the impact the nominee has made.
Visit our website where you can learn about us, view the newsletter and e-journal, access resources, peruse our programs and consider ways to get involved.



****Many thanks to Alma Flor Ada and Isabel Campoy for generously providing seed funds to launch this award.

Guidelines for submission for the Literacy and Service Recognition Award

WHAT IS IT?

This recognition is awarded annually to students for exemplary community service that relates to the purposes of the Literacy and Social Responsibility Special Interest Group (L-SR SIG) of the International Reading Association (IRA):

To study, understand, and promote high-quality programs which foster community service, participatory citizenship, social responsibility, appreciation for diversity, environmental stewardship, and caring behavior that occurs within the development of literacy across the curriculum.

Service projects might relate but are not limited to the following areas.

Classroom Communities of Inquiry

Literacy, Character Education & Service Learning

Language Arts & the Natural World

Community-based Writing

Fostering Social, Emotional & Academic Growth

Literacy & Civic/Social/environmental Engagement

Literacy & Respecting Diverse Cultures

HOW WILL AWARD WINNERS BE RECOGNIZED?

- First prize winners receive an engraved plaque (name of award, name of project and student leader/s, year) and certificate of recognition; second and third place winners receive certificates of recognition.
- Award winning student leaders are recognized and invited to present their work (live or through video) at the L-SR SIG meeting at the annual convention of the International Reading Association and are included in the printed program.
- Information about the award and winning programs are available publicly on the L-SR SIG website http://www.csulb.edu/misc/l-sr/ and reported in our e-Journal.

WHO CAN SUBMIT FOR THE AWARD AND HOW?

A teacher/librarian (sponsor) may nominate individual students for the *Literacy and Service Recognition Award*. Submit a packet of application that includes the following (I) contact information and (II) project information:

I. Contact Information for

- 1. Sponsor/nominator (name, address, phone number, email address) (Note: Each sponsor may nominate only ONE project/program per year.)
- 2. Student leader/s (name/s, address/es, phone number/s, email address/es, name/s of school/s, age/s of student/s)
- 3. Parent/guardian (name, address, phone number, email address) for each student leader
- 4. Other **key** individuals involved in the program/project (name, address, phone number, email address, ages if college age or younger)
- 5. Name, address, phone number, and email address for: principal, superintendent, local newspaper, local radio station, local TV station

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Guidelines for submission for the Literacy and Service Recognition Award continued

II. Project information

- 1. Name of project/program (please create a name if it did not have one previously)
- 2. A brief essay (written by the student leader/s, if possible) describing the project/program including numbers of students involved and individuals served and how, why and when the project/program got started. Tell how it relates to literacy and to an area of interest of our group (L-SR SIG). Tell the specific contributions the student leader/s made to the quality of the program.
- 3. Validating evidence of the extent and impact of the program how do you know a difference was made (e.g., testimonials, letters of support from partners, letters of commendation, newspaper articles about the project and/or student leader/s, website URL, if one exists, which provides information about the program and the results of the program). Include photographs or a short video of the "project in action." Please identify each person in the pictures and provide *Release Information* for each which includes: a statement that the photo may be used publicly (on our website, eJournal, etc.), with signatures for each individual (also include signatures for each guardian for those 18 years of age and younger).
- 4. Strongly recommended: A short video clip in digital format on a CD or DVD (maximum of 5 minutes) which involves the student leader/s and information about the project (such as the students describing the program and its impact on the community and themselves). Also provide *Release Information* (see #3) indicating permission to use the video on our website if selected for the award.
- 5. Also please indicate the willingness of the student leader/s with their sponsor/guardians to attend the annual IRA convention, if selected, to receive the award in person and to describe the program to the audience in a 5-minute presentation. The videotape or a *Skype* correspondence may serve in lieu of attendance.

LSR Awards will be presented Tuesday am, May 10, 2011, in Orlando, FL.

Send all materials (via email and/or regular mail) to the Award Chair of the IRA Literacy and Social Responsibility Special Interest Group by <u>December 1, 2010</u> for the 2011 *Literacy and Service Recognition Award*. You will receive confirmation of receipt of materials via email. You will be notified about results of committee review by January 30, 2011. If you have questions, please contact the chair of awards via email.

Denise Stuart, LSR Award Chair dstuart@uakron.edu
Zook 10, The University of Akron Akron, OH 44325-4205

A Little Lagniappe......from AAUP

The following piece by AAUP president Cary Nelson--about BP's impact on academic freedom following the Gulf oil spill-- was published in <u>Inside Higher</u> <u>Ed</u> on Thursday, July 22.It was followed by interviews with the BBC, the Associated Press, and United Press International. Stories quoting the AAUP president and citing the organization then appeared in over 2,000 media outlets in such countries as Australia, Britain, Canada, Greece, France, Khazakstan, and New Zealand.

BP and Academic Freedom

On Friday, July 16, Ben Raines, a reporter for Mobile, Alabama's <u>Press-Register</u>, published a story detailing extensive efforts by BP to employ scientists engaged in (or likely to engage in) research about the massive oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. *Inside Higher Ed* has since conducted independent interviews for <u>its own coverage</u>. The contracts offered by the giant company, according to both sources, restrict the scientists from publishing research results, sharing them with other scientists, or even talking about them for as long as three years, a serious restraint in the midst of an ongoing crisis.

Both during the immediate crisis and for an extended period as government leaders and the courts figure out how to respond to the Gulf tragedy, the work these scientists do will essentially belong to BP, which will be free to suppress it or characterize it in any way it chooses. Faculty members under contract to BP, meanwhile, would be unable to testify against the company in court and would be available to testify on the company's behalf. Several faculty members in the area have confirmed to the American Association of University Professors that they have been offered contracts by BP in exchange for restrictive confidentiality clauses. A notably chilling provision directs contracted scientists to communicate through BP's lawyers, thus raising the possibility that research findings will be constrained by lawyer-client privilege.

The oil spill is not only a catastrophic economic and environmental disaster for the Gulf region; it also has major implications for energy policy in both the United States and the rest of the world. The ability to share research results promptly and freely is not only a basic tenet of academic freedom; in this case, it is also critical to the health of the region and the world. While more investigative work is needed, the very prospect of an interested corporation worth billions of dollars blocking the free exchange of university research and controlling the work scientists choose to do is deeply disturbing. If knowledgeable scientists cannot testify in court, the ability of

injured parties to win just compensation is also jeopardized. But the longterm threat to American society is still more grave: we need independent faculty voices, perhaps more so now — in a knowledge-based society — than ever before.

In its founding 1915 Declaration, the AAUP warned of the "danger of restrictions upon the expression of opinions" that "call into question the moral legitimacy or social expediency of economic conditions or commercial practices in which large vested interests are involved." Our 2004 "<u>Statement on Corporate Funding of Academic Research</u>" establishes the fundamental standard: "Such contracts should explicitly provide for the open communication of research results, not subject to the sponsor's permission for publication."

Universities that prohibit faculty members from doing research that violates this principle, in my view, are protecting academic freedom, not restricting it. Of course in recommending that universities enforce this principle I am going beyond current AAUP policy. The world has changed. The increasing impact of corporate funding on the integrity of faculty research is among the changes higher education must confront. The decision about whether to sign restrictive contracts is not simply a matter of individual choice. It has broad implications for higher education and for the society at large.

At least one university has refused an institution-wide contract with BP for exactly these reasons. Many individual faculty members are declining BP offers or withdrawing from existing ones. Perhaps this is the time to reexamine the increasing role corporations are playing in funding and controlling university research. Universities should work with faculty to set ethical standards for industry collaboration that champion the public interest and discourage faculty members from selling their freedom of speech and research to the highest bidder.

Meanwhile, we urge other news media to join the effort to interview area scientists, gather copies of BP contracts, and publish the results. This story needs to be told in full. Universities should also consider where the public interest lies before permitting faculty members to sign contracts that limit the free exchange of information and bar public testimony. BP itself should certainly invest in research related to the spill, but it should do so without curtailing either faculty members' free speech rights or their academic freedom. To do otherwise could prove hazardous to all of our health.